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Perceptions Of Public School Superintendents In New Jersey Regarding Charter Schools

Vincent J. Occhino
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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN NEW JERSEY REGARDING CHARTER SCHOOLS

Vincent J. Occhino

Seton Hall University

March, 2001

The purpose of this study was to gather reliable information about the charter school movement from the chief operating officers of public school districts in New Jersey. Two hundred thirty-four superintendents (N=234) returned completed questionnaires, a 42.4% return rate. A majority of respondents described themselves as knowledgeable about charter schools and about the New Jersey Charter School Act of 1995. School districts in this study were similar to public school districts in New Jersey relative to District Type, Enrollment, Socioeconomic Status (DFG), Budget, and Tax Rate. Most survey respondents had no direct experience with Charter Schools. However, public school districts with Charter Schools, or in the planning stages, were well represented in this study.

The first research question in this study was "What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey?" The results of the data analysis, comparing superintendents' responses to a neutral point, showed that district superintendents in this study were aware of charter schools, and were skeptical, but they were "not involved." Although respondents were not anticipating charter school implementation, they were not "too busy" to think about charter schools, and they did not agree with the rationale for charter school implementation provided in the Survey. These results were almost identical to findings reported by Ogden (1995).

The second research question in this study was "Are there differences in perceptions of superintendents who have a charter school operating, or in the planning stages, and those of public school superintendents whose district have no plans for a

charter school?" The results of the data analysis showed that superintendents in districts with charter school presence were more aware, more interested, more involved, and were more likely to be "anticipating" charter school development than those without charter schools. Respondents with charter school presence were not "too busy to think about charter schools," and disagreed more strongly with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

The third research question in this study was, "Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other selected descriptive variables?" The percent of variance for statistically significant correlation coefficients was used to summarize findings. With respect to charter school impact, Charter School Status explained 24% of the variance related to "involvement with charter schools." The majority of districts who had no plans for charter schools disagreed with Section IV of the survey, describing the effects of charter schools on the school district.

Self-rated Knowledge of Charter Schools and Self-rated Knowledge of the Charter School Act of 1995 explained more than ten percent of the variance related to "awareness of charter schools", and whether or not respondents were "too busy to think about charter schools." As Self-rated Knowledge of the Charter School Act of 1995 increased, disagreement with Section IV, "What are the effects of charter school implementation in your school district?" increased.

None of the financial variables reported in this study explained more than five percent of the variance in perceptions of charter schools. Of critical interest in New Jersey, however, lower socioeconomic districts were more likely to be pleased with the opportunity to try charter schools, and were more likely to agree with Section III of the survey, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school districts?"

This study was limited to only one of many significant stakeholders in the charter school movement: public school superintendents in state of New Jersey during the summer of 2000. It was assumed that the district superintendents actually completed the

anonymous surveys used in this study, rather than delegating the task to other district staff. The data analysis was descriptive of respondents only, and could not be generalized to the hypothetical population of all public school superintendents in New Jersey. Finally, correlational findings did not imply causation: interpretation of results may be better explained by sampling and survey bias or other unknown and uncontrolled variables.

**PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
IN NEW JERSEY REGARDING CHARTER SCHOOLS**

BY

VINCENT J. OCCHINO

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Degree of Doctor of Education**

March 2001

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Prior to undertaking the task of writing the dissertation, I, like many doctoral students before me, performed a thorough search of studies completed in my chosen area to acquire, among a number of things, a sense of form and style. Because of its position in the study, generally, one of the first writings the reader encounters is the author's acknowledgement or dedication. Only after completing the task of researching and writing the dissertation can one truly begin to understand the depth and sincerity of the author's message of gratitude.

I tried to find the perfect phrases to describe Dr. Carol Turner's belief, support, and countless hours of assistance to me, but somehow they do not convey her act of kindness. I plan to honor her by modeling her gift to me, by offering my assistance to any willing learner I meet along life's journey.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Americans invest millions of tax dollars in public education, and Americans expect a strong return on this investment. Public schools across the nation must stand ready to welcome children from diverse cultural and social backgrounds; to educate these children to the highest standards of excellence; and to prepare these children to take their place as productive citizens in a competitive and rapidly changing global economy. The value Americans place on public education to transmit the culture, while preparing its youth to enter the work force, makes our nation unique and has for a long time been a source of admiration by the world community.

Critical indicators of public school success and failure are debated in the mass media and proposed reforms have been mandated by national and state government. During the last fifty years, we have seen public response to Sputnik change the standard for math and science and the civil rights movement dismantle publicly funded separate but equal education by gender, race and disability. During the past ten years, the widespread demand for increased parental choice in public education has fueled the charter school movement.

As an innovative approach to educational reform, charter schools had successful beginnings in the early ninety's in Minnesota and California. Today, a number of states throughout the country have adopted charter schools legislation. Since the first charter schools

were established by the Minnesota legislature in 1991, more than twenty-nine states have followed suit.

New Jersey Charter School Movement

The discussion of the ability of public schools to educate continues in New Jersey and is witnessed in the current debate over the Charter School Program Act of 1995. Simply stated, this debate is about two things, education and money. From an educational perspective, charter schools claim to offer students a new setting, mixed-grade classes and the ability to experiment with school methods that are less structured and bureaucratic. From a financial standpoint, charter schools take monies away from existing school districts. This effect, the erosion of funding support for public education is, many believe, helping to clear the way for vouchers, privatization, and education management organizations. (Glovin, 1998)

Former New Jersey Governor Christie Whitman and State Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz have initiated school reform programs in an effort to respond to the perception of the public's frustration and demands for improving education within the state. The governor believed that charter schools offer educational alternatives within the public school system to families who would otherwise have no options. Evidence of the governor's position has been provided by her comments on the subject. For example, on a recent tour of the North Star Academy Charter School in Newark, New Jersey, Governor Whitman stated, "Charters are not the whole answer. They are not right for everybody; they will not solve every problem. They are designed not to undermine; they are designed to bring innovation into the system. This is an experiment to make all education better." (Chiles, 1998)

Statement of Purpose

In his text, Understanding Public Policy, (1995) Thomas R. Dye devotes a chapter to "Policy Evaluation: Assessing the Impact of Public Policy". Dye noted that policy decisions, which solve a problem for one group in society, might very well create problems for other groups. Dye explains that policy evaluation is learning about the consequences of public policy. He states policy impacts on real-world conditions as follows:

1. Policy influences the target situation or group
2. Policy affects situations or groups other than the target (spillover effects)
3. Policy influences future as well as immediate conditions
4. Policy incurs direct costs, in terms of resources devoted to the program
5. Policy incurs indirect costs, including loss of opportunities to do other things

Despite the growing literature on the charter school movement at the national level, currently only one study on the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 exists (Kane, 1998). In light of the highly political nature of this reform initiative, additional research assessing the results of charter schools is greatly needed to bring objectivity to the debate. As the number of charter schools continue to grow in New Jersey, educators, government officials and policy makers need information for effective decision making. This study seeks to provide the needed data that will assist in a more comprehensive understanding of the role charter schools will play in providing a free public education to the children of our state. This study will not resolve the competing political interests of the various stakeholders of the charter school policy initiative.

However, reports such as this analysis may provide necessary information during the present review and debate of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995.

Statement of the Problem

Since the passage of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995, some school districts have fought the granting of charters in their communities. They claimed that the establishment of charter schools in their districts was creating financial stress, racial imbalance, and compromising the quality of education on their already over-burdened public school systems. If charter schools are going to succeed in our state, then it is necessary to identify the perceptions of educational leaders and policy makers at the local level and to identify barriers, which may impede the acceptance, and growth of this reform initiative.

A study by Ogden (1995) found that "superintendent's perceptions could prove to be critical for charter schools, and could be the decisive factor in the success or failure of the concept." Sperling (1999) conducted a follow-up study to Ogden's original research. He noted that changes in charter school legislation and the rapid growth of charter schools in the state of Michigan prompted the need to re-examine perceptions of public school superintendents regarding the impact of charter schools.

Public school superintendents are in the position to initiate change. Local boards of education depend on the superintendent's expertise and recommendations regarding state mandates and laws such as the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. Therefore, it is important to determine if the local public school superintendent perceives any barriers that could influence the success or failure of the implementation of a charter school in his/her school

district. Clearly, the perception of public school superintendents regarding current charter school legislation needs to be examined.

Research Questions

This study will investigate the public school superintendent's perceptions of charter schools. Specifically, this research is intended to address the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey?
2. Are there differences in perceptions of public school superintendents who have a charter school currently operating, or in the planning stages, and those of public school superintendents whose districts have no plans for a charter school?
3. Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other descriptive variables? Descriptive variables included ratings of self-knowledge by respondents, critical variables related to the financial needs and resources of school districts, and variables related to the impact of charter schools on the district of residence.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to only one of many significant stakeholders in the charter school movement: public school superintendents in state of New Jersey during the summer of 2000. It was assumed that the district superintendents actually completed the anonymous surveys used in this study, rather than delegating the task to other district staff. The data analysis was descriptive of respondents only, and could not be generalized to the hypothetical population of all public school superintendents in New Jersey. Finally, correlational findings did not imply causation:

interpretation of results may be better explained by sampling and survey bias or other unknown and uncontrolled variables.

Definition of Terms

The following words and terms used in this study shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Charter School As defined by the New Jersey Department of Education, "a charter school is a public school that operates independently of the district board of education under a charter granted by the Commissioner." A charter school is a publicly funded, corporate entity offering a free alternative to the traditional public school setting.

District Factor Grouping (DFG's) is a system introduced by the New Jersey Department of Education as a means of ranking school districts in accordance with their socioeconomic status. This measure is a composite of income, occupation and education.

District of Residence refers to the public school district in which the charter school is physical located.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review begins with a brief overview of the charter concept. A discussion of the national interest in and growth of the charter school movement follows. A brief summary of the charter school reform movement in the states of California and Michigan is presented in order to contrast it to the charter school momentum in the state of New Jersey. Included in the review are some of the perceived barriers to the growth and support for charter schools. The chapter concludes with an overview of the current status of charter schools operating in New Jersey.

The Charter Concept

The use of the term "charter" in legal matters refers to contracts and written instruments in which agreements, provisions and authorizations to carry out some type of business activity is delineated. Common historical examples of charters would include the formal agreements between seventeenth century explorers and their sponsors. The "charter" concept to describe a new setting for the delivery of educational services to students would include a written agreement between its founders and the authorizing agency. The concept of charter schools first appeared in educational literature with the publication of Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts. Educator and author Ray Budde proposed a school that would empower teachers with the authority and responsibility for educating children while being free from many of the constraints that stifle or impede innovation. Budde's idea would allow teachers in the traditional school setting to propose an innovative educational plan to the local school board for

approval. If their idea was accepted, an agreement or "charter" would be written, describing the implementation of the plan and binding both sides to the resources and commitment needed to successfully carry out the goals of the charter (Budde, 1998).

The national climate for educational reform during the 1980's was receptive to innovative ideas for schooling that gave autonomy to primary stakeholders. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, supported the charter concept originated by Budde. Shanker was responsible for popularizing Budde's idea. Later, Shanker would further define a charter school as "a school within a school" (Mulholland, & Amsler, 1992). His vision included a minimum of six teachers within a given school working collaboratively with parents and the teachers' union in planning and designing a new school. A charter would be written detailing the new schools innovative programs and practices. In addition, measurable, performance-based assessment procedures would be identified which would be used to support the schools effectiveness and continued operation. This plan for a "new school within a school" would be presented to the local board for approval. Once the charter, or contract, was approved the new school would be considered autonomous and free to operate on its own.

National Interest In Charter Schools

Already facing competition from private schools and home schooling, traditional public schools' market dominance is being challenged by the current appeal of charter schools. The Center for Educational Reform reported that over 2,000 charter schools are in operation nationwide for the 2000-2001 school year (Bowman, 2000). Since the first charter schools were established by the Minnesota legislature in 1991, more than twenty-nine states have followed suit. A number of studies are currently being published indicating that the charter idea is working

and impacting positively on children who attend these alternative public schools (Bowman, 2000). The opportunity to create a new school setting, where everyone shares a common vision and purpose, has greatly contributed to the attraction and growth of charter schools. Charter schools have empowered parents to participate in educational decisions that affect their children. Charter schools are based on the premise that small groups of committed educators and parents can do a better job than the school boards, administrators, and teachers unions who control public education. Proponents of this alternative school setting believe that the competition for students will spur improvement (Nathan, 1996).

Seymour B. Sarason states in the preface to Charter Schools: Another Flawed Educational Reform, that the charter school movement is the most radical educational reform effort in the post World War II era. Dr. Sarason qualifies his use of the term "radical" by explaining that the charter school idea has spurred the imagination and garnered support from influential individuals within the political arena (Sarason, 1998). National and state leaders committed to revitalizing public education have endorsed the charter alternative. President Clinton during his 1996 presidential campaign promised to seek funding for 3,000 additional charter schools. Paul Wellstone, United States Senator from Minnesota, included remarks in an address to state legislators that the charter school movement is a "marvelous innovation spreading throughout the country" (Nathan, 1998).

The spread of the charter idea across the nation continues to gather momentum. A study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (1997) updated previously collected information on the charter school movement over a four-year period. The study supports the notion that the number of charter schools nationally continues to increase annually. During the 1997-98

academic year 693 charter schools were in operation in 23 states. However, the number of closures represents a disproportionate number to schools that were granted charters. Fewer than one in twenty charter schools have closed since the first school opened in Minnesota in 1992 (See Appendix A).

The national report highlighted common characteristics of the charter schools surveyed. They found that charter schools tended to be smaller in size with a median enrollment of approximately 150 students compared to a median enrollment of approximately 500 students in traditional public schools. Regarding grade configuration, the study showed charter schools span all grade levels. However, 26% of the charter schools surveyed reported to be organized as elementary (K-6, K-8). Another national trend indicated that charter schools serve a proportionately similar racial and ethnic distribution of students as other public schools. The majority of charter schools represented in the study (63%) serve low-income students. Yet, students with disabilities were somewhat less represented in charter schools than in other public schools. Classified students attending charter schools represented only eight percent of the total school population as compared to eleven percent in public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Charter School Reform Movement In California ↵

California was the second state to enact charter school legislation. By September of 1997, California ranked second in total number of operating charter schools. There were over 36,000 students being serviced in 130 charter schools. Similar to other states across the country, support for charter schools in California was divided. Local school board members with support from the state teachers' union were openly critical about charter school reform. Recognizing the

need for empirical data, investigators headed by professor Amy Stuart Wells of the University of California set out to examine the claims of charter school advocates against the reported experiences of educators, parents and students. Their findings were published in a report entitled Beyond The Rhetoric of Charter School Reform: A Study of Ten California School Districts (Wells, & others, 1997). The researchers conducted case studies of 17 charter schools in 10 school districts within the state of California. Their methodology included quantitative and qualitative data collected from educators, policy makers, parents and students. They set out to measure the impact of California's charter legislation on the local public schools. For the most part, the major findings of their study did not support the claims of the charter school advocates. A brief summary of their study found:

1. California charter schools did not have a systematic means to measure if their students were achieving more than their counterparts in the local public schools.
2. Local school boards were reluctant to monitor or become involved with charter schools. Most officials felt they lacked information and authority to act on concerns.
3. The degree of autonomy for charter schools from the bureaucracy of the public educational system varied among the sample population. Some charter schools reported that they were dependent on support from the local public school district.
4. California's per pupil funding formula contributed to a wide disparity in allocations for charter schools throughout the state. Furthermore, charter school entitlements were funneled through the local district, which contributed to the funding concern.

5. The claim that charter schools would be more efficient, therefore require less funding, was unfounded. Charter schools depend on private funding to offset expenses in their current operational budget.
6. Charter schools have more control than public schools over the selection of students being enrolled.
7. The claim that charter schools would stimulate competition and co-operation was not supported.

As expected, the UCLA study received much criticism from charter school advocates. Joe Nathan, director of the Center for School Change, University of Minnesota, accused the author of the study of being biased. He stated that Professor Wells has been associated with the California teachers' union, which has publicly opposed charter school legislation in the state. Another critic who attacked the study was Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Educational School Change at the University of Minnesota. She stated that there were a number of studies conducted nationally which demonstrated the benefits of charter schools (Henry, 1998).

Professor Wells responded by defending her study, stating that it is the most comprehensive investigation of charter schools to date. She emphasized that the data represented over 450 interviews with supporting documentation and statistics. Professor Wells cited the need for additional research in the area of equity, access resources, accountability, impact on the public system, and classroom practices (Wells, 1999).

Charter School Movement In Michigan

Nationally, states with charter school legislation indicate a wide disparity in a number of key elements. These include the authority granting a charter, type of charter school, maximum

number of charters to be allowed within the state, legal status of the charter school, funding and assessment. A review of state charter legislation conducted by the National School Boards Association characterized Michigan's law as "one of the nation's least-restrictive charter school laws" (Good, & Braden, 2000). Two studies investigating the perceptions of public school superintendents in Michigan regarding charter schools suggest similar findings to the study conducted in California. Odgen (1995) and Sperling (1999) found that Superintendents were generally negative regarding the charter school reform movement in their state. They recognized that charter schools were gathering support from the national political arena, but were not convinced that charter schools would be able to improve performance outcome of their intended students.

Charter School Movement In New Jersey

In New Jersey, former Governor Whitman's position in support of the charter school idea is well known. The school reform efforts of the governor and her appointed commissioner of education have been chronicled regularly in newspapers throughout the state. During her administration the legislature passed the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. The New Jersey charter school legislation provided for the establishment of new educational settings, supported by public funds, yet waived many of the rules and regulations traditional public schools are required to observe. For the first time in the history of New Jersey, the state's grip over public education was eased slightly (See Appendix B).

The New Jersey Department of Education has taken the position that charter schools will put pressure on districts to change, in essence, building an element of competition into what otherwise is seen as a local monopoly.

"Charter schools hold forth a variety of different possibilities with the greatest promise being that of the creation of a new kind of publicly funded school, one that breaks the traditional mold in an effort to help children achieve at higher levels. The introduction of charter schools is not just part of an isolated reform effort, but is one promising strategy in the broader effort to bring significant improvements in student achievement" (Klagholz, 1997).

In the same aforementioned policy memo, Commissioner Leo Klagholz stated that the estimated cost to the local school district to enable compliance with the proposed regulations would be minimal. Yet, during a public hearing before the State Board of Education on the proposed charter school rules, the most frequently asked questions related to Subchapter 7: Financial Operations. Of the twenty-two (22) individuals providing testimony before the State Board of Education, 31% of the questions had to do with the financial impact of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 on the resident district. (See Appendix C for a summary of public comments) (New Jersey Register, 1997).

Former New Jersey Governor Christie Whitman and State Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz initiated school reform programs in an effort to respond to the perception of the general public's frustration and demands for improving education within the state. The ex-governor believes that charter schools will offer educational alternatives within the public school system to families who would otherwise have no options. Evidence of the governor's position has been provided by her comments on the subject. During a scheduled tour of the North Star Academy Charter School in Newark, New Jersey, former Governor Whitman seized the opportunity to showcase her support for school reform by commenting that, "Charters are not the whole answer.

They're not right for everybody; they won't solve every problem. They are designed not to undermine; they are designed to bring innovation into the system. This is an experiment to make all education better" (Chiles, 1998).

On the other side of the issue, opponents of the charter school movement in New Jersey argue that the current legislation will harm existing, successful programs in traditional public schools by competing for scarce resources. School board members worry about the potential transfer of tax money to the charter school. Under state regulation initially adopted on July 10, 1997, funding for the charter school (90%) comes mainly from the existing school district.

"The school district of residence shall pay directly to the charter school for each student enrolled in the charter school who resides in the district a presumptive amount equal to 90% of the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the district. At the discretion of the commissioner and at the time the charter is granted, the commissioner may require the school district of residence to pay directly to the charter school for each student enrolled in the charter school amount equal to less than 90%. The commissioner may require an amount, which shall not exceed 100% of the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the district of residence. The per pupil amount paid to the charter school shall not exceed the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the district in which the charter school is located. The district of residence shall also pay directly to the charter school any categorical aid attributable to the student, provided the student is receiving appropriate categorical services, and any federal funds attributable to the student" (Payments By School District of Residence; Limitations; Aid Payments, 1999).

Other arguments in the dispute include statements suggesting that charter schools will divert tax dollars from existing districts without a corresponding decrease in their costs. The loss of students across the resident district to the charter school does not reduce the obligation of the district to heat buildings and pay for teachers' salaries. Moreover, there is a concern that charter schools will recruit the best and brightest students. Opponents believe that elitism, segregation and the loss of monies are valid consequences and ultimately unfair to those children who remain in the public schools.

Certain types of districts have gone on record to protest specific inequities in the New Jersey charter school funding controversy through administrative appeals. These school districts claim that the establishment of charter schools in their districts are creating financial stress, racial imbalance, and compromising the quality of education on their already over-burdened public school systems. Large, inner city districts such as Trenton in Mercer County, East Orange in Essex County and Red Bank in Monmouth County have appealed the establishment of charter schools in their communities, citing that they will be losing large amounts of needed revenue to schools over which they have no control (Goodnough, 1998).

During the 1997-98 school year there were two operating charter schools in Trenton. An additional five schools were approved to operate for the 1998-99 academic year. Dr. Paul Sequeira, Superintendent for the Trenton Public School District, stated that he expects to lose as many as 1,000 of the district's 15,000 students to charter schools this fall. "It's a tough situation for us. We'll have to figure out how we can survive with a substantial loss of revenues." (Goodnough, 1998).

Middle size, suburban districts such as Franklin Township in Somerset County, Clifton in Passaic County and Englewood in Bergen County argued that the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995, should be struck down as unconstitutional because it violates the "equal protection rights" of students and parents. Attorneys for these three school districts stated in legal briefs that funds traditionally earmarked for public education were being siphoned off for charter schools. This action was establishing two classes of students - those lucky enough to be selected to attend the charter schools and those left behind in public schools that are financially squeezed. (Glovin & Rimback, 1998).

On January 21, 1998, Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz, approved twenty-three (23) charter school applications for the 1998-99 school year. The following month, fourteen (14) resident public school districts filed an appeal of the Commissioner's decision to the State Board of Education. On April 1, 1998, the State Board of Education affirmed the Commissioner's January 21, 1998 decision to grant charter approvals to the fourteen appellants. The State Board's position was similar in all findings. Their official response was as follows:

"This is one of fourteen appeals from contingent approvals given by the Commissioner of Education to applications submitted to obtain charters to operate charter schools pursuant to the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995, N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-1 et seq. We have presumed the validity of the statute and implementing regulations for the purpose of determining whether a specific applicant should be permitted to proceed in this process. Hence, for the purpose of this review, we have focused on whether the appeal raises concerns of such character as to preclude the grant of a charter or revealed circumstances

which must be addressed before the proposed school can become operational" (School Boards Association, 1998).

Of the fourteen appeals, twelve (12) school districts are still determined to challenge state officials and have filed Notices of Appeal, seeking review of the State Board's decision by the Appellate Division. A list of appellants and a summary of their legal arguments are presented in Table 1.

The appellants presented in Table 1 share a common perception that there exists an inequality and flaw in the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995, namely funding and violation of state and/or federal constitutional entitlements. The legal argument that the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 is constitutionally defective is illustrated in the provision that when granting a charter the Commissioner of Education has given private individuals, who are neither elected by the public nor appointed by elected officials, unfettered use of tax dollars. The attorneys for the Morris School District argue:

"The New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 circumvents the doctrine of checks and balances because it grants public funds for individuals to operate public charter schools. In turn, these private citizens spend public funds and are generally unaccountable to the public or the State for exactly how they choose to spend public monies in the day to day operation of the school. Moreover, there is no statutory provision requiring that public hearings be conducted on the use of these funds. There is no public vote or input through an elected body on the creation and implementation of the charter school's budget, nor is there any law controlling expenditure of public funds" (Geppert, & Davis, 1998).

Table 1

Appeals To Revoke Commissioner's Decision to Grant Charters Before the State Board of Education

	Appellant	Legal Argument
1	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Greater Brunswick Charter School, Middlesex County. Highland Park Board of Education/ State Board Docket #13-98	Administrative process was flawed; No statutory basis for the approval of a regional charter school; Unfunded mandate; Financial and racial impact
2	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Ocean City chARTer TECHNical High School for the Performing Arts, Cape May County. Ocean City Board of Education/ State Board Docket #16-98	CSA is unconstitutional – violates child's right to "T&E" education; Divests local taxpayers of due process in use of public funds
3	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Franklin Charter School, Somerset County. Franklin Township Board of Education/ State Board Docket #17-98	Fiscal impact of CSA violates T&E law; Unconstitutional delegation of legislative authority to private body.
4	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the East Orange Community Charter School, Essex County. East Orange Board of Education/ State Board Docket #18-98	CSA fails to provide hearing and fact finding; Exempts from rules applicable public schools -financial, racial and educational impact.
5	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Red Bank Charter School, Monmouth County. Borough of Red Bank Board of Education/ State Board Docket #19-98	CSA violates Equal Protection Clause of State Constitution due to failure to consider financial, racial & ed impact.
6	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Pleasantech Academy Charter School, Atlantic County. Pleasantville Board of Education/ State Board Docket #20-98	Application deficient; Special needs district; Economic burden on school district.
7	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Pleasantville Charter School for Academic Excellence, Atlantic County. Pleasantville Board of Education/ State Board Docket #21-98	Application deficient; Special needs district; Economic burden on school district; Proposed founders conflict of interest and violates Ethics Law.
8	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Academy Charter High School, Monmouth County, Asbury Park Board of Education/ State Board Docket #22-98	Impact the racial balance at Asbury Park High School; Application deficient
9	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Classical Academy Charter School of Clifton, Passaic County. Clifton Board of Education/ State Board Docket #23-98	Application deficient; Economic burden on school district; Deprive 9,000 students attending district's schools of a "T&E" education
10	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Teaneck Community Charter School, Bergen County. Teaneck Board of Education/ State Board Docket #24-98	CSA exceed statutory authority; CSA violates due process and equal protection
11	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the Patrick Douglas Charter School, Monmouth County. Matawan-Aberdeen Regional District/ State Board Docket #25-98	Constitutional issues; CSA fails to provide hearing and fact finding; Unfunded mandate; Financial impact
12	In the Matter of the Grant of the Charter School Application of the International Charter School of Trenton and the Granville Charter School Charter School, Mercer County. Trenton Board of Education/ State Board Docket #28-98	Special needs district; Economic burden on school district; Deprive students attending district's schools of a "T&E" education.

Source: New Jersey Department of Education Web Site, Decisions of the State Board of Education, April, 1998.

Another powerful organization taking a position against the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 is the New Jersey School Boards Association. On February 23, 1998, a meeting organized by NJSBA was convened to discuss concerns about the impact of the charter school legislation. The participants included board members, administrators and school attorneys representing a number of public school districts throughout the state directly affected by the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. The significance of this meeting was that it marked the beginning of an organized challenge by boards of education to seek repeal or legislative amendments of the current law. The following is a sample of statements raised during the meeting:

1. The acting superintendent of the Princeton Public Schools stated that the impact of a charter school in his district was to increase the tax levy burden, polarize the community, and reduce the district's ability to compete because it had to reduce programs as it loses money to the charter school.
2. A board member explained that the community of Pleasantville had passed a referendum to construct two new buildings and had also been given permission by the Department of Education to add a third floor to an existing building. Now the Department has approved two charter schools in the district, invalidating all estimates for student population growth.
3. A member of the Clifton Board of Education illustrated the frustrating dichotomous situation created by the charter school legislation:
 - a. State wants school districts to reduce costs, yet it acts to raise local taxes.
 - b. State pushes for regionalization, yet it is encouraging the creation of numerous small schools.

- c. State says it's promoting experimentation, yet it puts the burden of paying for that experiment on local districts.
 - d. State says it is stimulating competition, yet it does so in a way that hurts local districts' ability to compete.
 - e. State says it wants to increase citizen votes on school budgets, yet it establishes charter schools, which do not provide for voting on their school budgets.
4. A board member from Ocean City and Upper Township said that Ocean City had 215 students expected in its charter school, leaving 1,100 students in the district. The loss of funds for the 215 students will mean that the board will have to cut field trips, extra curricular activities and other items from its budget (New Jersey School Board Association, 1998).

Presently, New Jersey School Boards Association is supporting legislation that requires that charter schools be established and operated by the board of education of the resident public school district. However, if a charter school is established and operated by an entity other than a local board of education, the resident school district will not be required to provide financial or other support. A spokesman for the school boards association stated that the association's position is that charter schools should be funded by the state. Local school boards should not be paying for a state experiment. He noted that only a few students from the school districts are enrolling in charter schools, and this population is not large enough for the resident districts to realize any savings in reduced staff or closed classrooms. (Jaffe, 1998).

Prior to the 1997-1998 school year, the New Jersey Department of Education accepted a number of charter school proposals. During that time, the charter school reform movement was

growing nationally, but the idea of an experimental public school supported by state and local funds was just beginning to appeal to committed individuals seeking schooling alternatives for their children in New Jersey. One of the first assessments of how well the original thirteen charter schools were serving the 1,344 students they attracted was conducted by Professor Pearl Rock Kane, of Teachers College, Columbia University. In the preface, the authors state that the intent of the study was to provide "timely feedback to the various stakeholders on the experience of the first year of operation of New Jersey's charter schools" (Kane, 1998). The researchers conducted interviews with 200 people, recorded observations from sixty-five sites and analyzed collected data from all thirteen charter school participants. Their research questions attempted to identify the common differences between charter schools and the local traditional public school, as well as provide the lessons learned that would be of use to educators, state policy makers and future charter school founders. Of particular importance to this study were the opinions expressed by school superintendents in the school district of residence of the charter school. Superintendents in seven school districts were interviewed. Their responses as stated in the report include the following:

1. Charter schools had little or no influence on program or administrative practices in their school district.
2. Charter schools do impact negatively on the financial needs of the district.
3. Charter schools should be held accountable for student performance and be required to have public oversight.
4. Charter schools are free from state bureaucracy and regulations; this provides a highly beneficial advantage.

Their findings were similar to the issues, concerns and experiences cited previously in this chapter. Mainly, the study identified the major issues of funding, facilities, special education, accountability and assessment as ranking of high concern on the list of the respondents (See Appendix D).

A legislative subcommittee convened on May 6, 1999 to gather information on the impact of the method to provide funds to charter schools. The state's funding mechanism is perceived by charter school opponents as unfair and a burden to local property- tax payers. One speaker stated that the charter school in her community has polarized the community. "It pits neighbor against neighbor" (Yaffe, 1999). The majority of speakers before the subcommittee urged the legislators to change the funding mechanism or allow local districts to reject charter school proposals. During the meeting, Commissioner of Education David Hespe said, "Charter schools are the laboratories for change. They are change agents. Charter schools represent a revolution in thinking about our public school system" (Yaffe, 1999).

A few months later, Commissioner Hespe (1999) issued a report to the joint committee of public schools on status of New Jersey charter schools. The following is a summary of information contained within the report:

1. Upon passage of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995,⁴ the Department of Education received 38 charter school applications. Thirteen schools were approved to operate during the 1997-98 school year, while three applicants took an additional year to re-submit their plans.

2. Of the 23 applications approved to operate in September of 1998, only 17 charter schools were ready to open. This increased the total number of charter schools operational as of September 1998 to thirty.
3. In 1998, the Department of Education received 35 applications. There were 47 charter schools operating in 15 counties and serving approximately 9,000 students during the 1999-2000 school year.
4. The interest in charter schools is growing throughout the state. As of August 1, 1999, the current operational charter schools reported a total of 2,888 students were on waiting lists.
5. The typical New Jersey charter school has an average enrollment of approximately 190 students. The majority of schools are located in urban districts serving over 6,000 students. Compared to the traditional public school organization, there is no common grade level configuration among the current operational charter schools. During the 1999-2000 school year, 29 of the 47 charter schools were serving primary grade students.

The New Jersey Department of Education approved ten (10) of the thirteen (13) original charter schools to continue to operate for another five years. On February 2, 2001, David Hespe, the Commissioner of Education, announced that since the passage of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995, more than fifty (50) charter schools are currently operating within the state. The experimental schools currently serve approximately 10,500 students from as many as 220 communities. Commissioner Hespe stated, "that after a rigorous review and by the strength and success of their efforts, these schools deserve to continue to provide exciting alternatives to traditional education that have the potential to change all of our public schools in the years to come" (Star-Ledger, 2001).

Summary

The appeal of charter schools as an innovative approach to educational reform continues to attract the attention of parents, educators, and state and national leaders. The Center for Educational Reform reported that over 2,000 charter schools are in operation nationwide for the 2000-2001 school year. (Bowman, 2000) Since the first charter schools were established by the Minnesota legislature in 1991, more than twenty-nine states have followed suit. A number of studies are currently being published indicating that the charter idea is working and impacting positively on children who attend these alternative public schools. (Bowman, 2000) The opportunity to create a new school setting, where everyone shares a common vision and purpose, has greatly contributed to the attraction and growth of charter schools. Charter schools have empowered parents to participate in educational decisions that affect their children.

The charter school movement continues to be a controversial issue, yet to be resolved. As this trend continues, empirical research that focuses on student achievement and performance in charter schools is needed to validate the claims of charter school proponents. This study examines the impact of charter schools on the resident sending districts.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to ask public school superintendents in New Jersey to describe perceptions of charter schools. This chapter presents the sample, the survey, and the procedures used to collect the data. A description of the research design and the plan for data analysis follow.

Sample

The population domain for this study was defined as public school superintendents in the State of New Jersey, with the exception of those in charge of county vocational schools and special service schools. The New Jersey Department of Education Directory (1999) was used to identify chief school administrators in public school districts, located in the 21 counties of New Jersey. A total of 556 surveys were mailed to all public school superintendents in the State. Two hundred thirty-four superintendents (N=234) returned completed questionnaires, a 42.4 % return rate.

Ten demographic questions were used to capture descriptive information about respondents and their school districts. Each question was presented in a forced-choice or fill-in format. Forced choice items were analyzed as categorical variables and fill-in questions were analyzed as continuous variables.

Categorical Variables

The following categorical variables described school districts in this study: District Type, Student Enrollment, Socioeconomic Status, and the Status of Charter Schools in the district. Two categorical variables described respondents: Self-Rated Knowledge of Charter Schools and the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995.

District Type

New Jersey designates public schools in terms of the categorical variable District Type with values K-6, K-8, or K-12. Therefore, participants in this study were asked to describe the district type of their school system. Table 2 lists frequency distributions for District Type in the State of New Jersey and in the sample: 43% of surveyed districts were K-12, 38% were K-8, and 15% were K-6. The Median District Type in the State of New Jersey and in the sample was K-8

Table 2

What is Your School District Type?

State of New Jersey			Superintendent Survey		
Operating Type	Total	Percent	Grouping Type	Frequency	Percent
K-6	67	11.5	K-6	35	15.0
K-8*	281	48.0	K-8*	91	38.8
K-12	208	35.6	K-12	101	43.2
Total	556		Total	227	

*Indicates Median value: Fifty percent of respondents were below, or equal to the Median.

School District Enrollment

The State of New Jersey describes Student Enrollment as a categorical variable with the following values: less than 400, 400 to 750, 750 to 1800, 1800 to 3500, and more than 3500. Therefore, subjects were asked to describe Student Enrollment using these categories. Table 3 provides frequency distributions for student enrollments in New Jersey and in the sample. Thirteen percent of the districts in the sample had less than 400; 17% had 400 to 750; 29% had 750 to 1800; 15% had 1800 to 3500; and 22% had more than 3500. The Median Student Enrollment in the State of New Jersey and in the survey was 750 to 1800 students.

Table 3

What is Your School District Student Enrollment Range?

State of New Jersey			Superintendent Survey		
Enrollment Range	Size	Percent	Enrollment Range	Frequency	Percent
Less than 400	132	22.6	Less than 400	32	13.7
400 to 750	71	12.2	400 to 750	41	17.5
750 to 1,800*	145	24.8	750 to 1,800*	68	29.1
1,800 to 3,500	75	12.8	1,800 to 3,500	37	15.8
Over 3,500	133	22.7	Over 3,500	58	22.6
Total	556		Total	231	98.7

*Indicates Median value: Fifty percent of respondents were below, or equal to the Median.

DFG Rating

The State of New Jersey categorizes the socioeconomic status of school districts using a DFG rating with the following values: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J. "A" districts have the lowest socioeconomic level, and "B" districts have low socioeconomic status. CD, DE, FG, and GH have middle level socioeconomic status. "I" districts have high socioeconomic status, and "J" districts have the highest socioeconomic levels. Therefore, participants in this study were asked to describe the DFG level for their districts.

Table 4 provides frequency distributions for New Jersey DFG ratings and the DFG designations in the sample. In New Jersey, 6.1% of school districts were rated "A" districts. In this study, 6.9% of surveyed districts were designated as "A" districts. In New Jersey, 13.5% of school districts were rated "B" districts. In this study, 15.0% were "B" districts. Thus, districts with low socioeconomic status were well represented in this study.

Ten percent of sample districts were "CD" districts and 20% were "DE" districts. Fourteen percent of those sampled were "FG" districts and 14% were "GH" Districts. Sixteen percent of respondents were from "I" districts but only 1% were from "J" districts, representing higher socioeconomic status. The median for the sample, "DE" districts, was the same as the median for the State of New Jersey, "DE" districts.

Table 4

What Is Your School District Factor Grouping (DFG)?

State of New Jersey			Superintendent Survey		
DFG	N	Percent	DFG	F	Percent
A	34	6.1	A	16	6.9
B	75	13.5	B	35	15.0
CD	73	13.1	CD	25	10.7
DE*	100	18.0	DE*	47	20.2
FG	84	15.1	FG	34	14.6
GH	74	13.3	GH	34	14.6
I	101	18.2	I	38	16.3
J	15	2.7	J	4	1.7
Total	556	100.0	Total	233	100.0

*Indicates Median value: Fifty percent of respondents were below, or equal to the Median.

Status of Charter Schools

The State of New Jersey approves charter schools and considers pending applications. Therefore, participants in this study were asked to describe the Status of Charter Schools in their district. The categories for Charter School Status were "Currently Operating," "In the planning stages," or "None." Table 5 presents frequency distributions regarding the Status of Charter Schools in New Jersey for the 1999 - 2000 academic year, with the corresponding data from the respondents to this survey.

New Jersey data showed charter schools operating in only 9% of school districts in the State during 1999-2000, and charter schools "in the planning stages" at less than one percent of school districts during this same time period. In this study, 11.6% of respondents were currently operating charter schools and 5.6% indicated that their districts were "in the planning stages." As expected from the New Jersey State data, a significant percentage of respondents have no direct experience with Charter Schools. However, 17% of survey respondents had Charter Schools, or were in the planning stages.

Table 5

What Is the Status of Charter Schools in Your School District?

State of New Jersey			Superintendent Survey		
Status	N	Percent	Status	N	Percent
Currently Operating	54	9.2	Currently Operating	27	11.5
In Planning Stage	2	.4	In Planning Stage	13	5.6
No Plans *Median	529	90.4	No Plans *Median	193	82.5
Total State	585	100.0	Total	233	99.6

Note. *Indicates Median value: Fifty percent of respondents were below, or equal to the Median.

Independent Variable

A dichotomous independent variable was created for this study, called Charter School Presence. School districts with operating charter schools (n=27) were combined with school districts in the planning stages for charter schools (n=13). School districts reporting little or no

involvement with charter schools (n=193) remained the same. This transformation defined the independent variable in this study, Charter School Presence, with 17% of the sample having Charter School Presence (See Table 6).

Table 6

Charter School Presence In District?

State of New Jersey			Superintendent Survey		
Charter School Presence	N	Percent	Charter School Presence	N	Percent
Yes	56	9.6	Yes	40	17.1
No	529	90.4	No	193	82.5

Self-Rated Knowledge

Two categorical variables describe respondents in this study: self-rated knowledge of charter schools and self-rated knowledge the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. As seen from Table 7, eighty four percent of respondents rated their knowledge of charter schools as good or very good.

Table 7

How Would You Rate Your Knowledge of Charter Schools?

Rating Section	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	57	24.4
Good*	139	59.4
Not Sure	25	10.7
Poor	9	3.8
Very Poor	1	.4
Total	231	98.7

*Indicates Median value: Fifty percent of respondents were below, or equal to the Median.

Table 8 indicates that 75% of the respondents rated their knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 as very good or good.

Table 8

How Would You Rate Your Knowledge of The New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995?

Rating Section	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	40	17.1
Good*	137	58.5
Not Sure	37	15.8
Poor	15	6.4
Very Poor	2	.9
Total	231	98.7

*Indicates Median value: Fifty percent of respondents were below, or equal to the Median.

Continuous Variables

The following continuous variables describe sample districts in this study: Budget in Millions for 1999-2000, School Tax Rate for 1999-2000, Number of Students Sent to Charter Schools during the past year, and the Current Expense Budget Appropriation for charter schools for the 1999-2000 school year. Table 9 on the following page summarizes sample responses to these continuous variables.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics: Continuous Variables

Continuous Descriptive Variables	Survey Median	Survey Mean	Survey Standard Deviation
Your School District 1999-00 Total Current Expense Budget?	\$11,630,000	\$23,390,000	\$40,440,000
Your School District 1999-00 Equalized School Tax Rate?	1.4930	1.4305	0.3838
How many Students From Your District Were Sent to Charter School(s) During the 1999-00 School Year?	0	18.23	134.19
If applicable, Your School District 1999-00 Total Current Expense Budget Appropriation For Charter School(s)?	\$37,049	\$593,663	\$2,295,430 †

Budgets in Millions

According to the State of New Jersey, the median expense budget during the 1999-2000 was \$11.12 million dollars. The median for this sample was comparable: median sample budget

= \$11.63 million dollars. As can be seen from Table 9, the sample mean was \$23.39 million dollars and the standard deviation of \$40.44 million. The sample mean was twice as large as the sample median.

School Tax Rate

The State of New Jersey calculates an equalized school tax rate as an index of fiscal support from the community. The equalized school tax rate median for the State of New Jersey in 1999 was 1.446. In this sample, the equalized school tax rate was comparable: Survey median = 1.4930. The mean tax rate for the sample was 1.4305 with a standard deviation equal to 0.3838.

Students Sent to Charter Schools

With respect to students attending charter schools during 1999-2000, the median sample response was zero. A majority of sampled districts were not sending any students to charter schools during the past year. However, the arithmetic mean of students sent to charter schools was 18.23 with a calculated standard deviation of 134.19. The sample mean was greater than the sample median because a few schools in the sample were sending large numbers of students to charter schools.

Dollars Sent to Charter Schools

The median dollars sent to charter schools by respondents was zero. Seventy-three percent of the respondents to this survey had no budget allocated to charter schools. Approximately five per cent of the sample sent less than \$11,000 per year to support charter school students. Ten percent was allocated between \$14,000 and \$54,000 from district budgets to meet their financial obligations to students attending charter schools, and the remaining twelve

percent sent between \$ 60,000 and one million dollars to support students in charter schools. The sample mean was \$593,693 dollars sent to charter schools in 1999-2000.

Survey Instrument

The survey that was used in this study to assess superintendents' attitudes towards Charter Schools in New Jersey appears in Appendix E. This instrument was divided into two parts: The first part posed 39 questions, drawn from four sections of a questionnaire developed by Ogden (1995). The second part of the survey presented ten demographic questions used to characterize respondents and their school districts as described above.

The 39-item survey of superintendents' attitudes toward charter schools was divided into four sections, the dependent variables in this study. Personal reactions to charter schools were elicited by questions 1.1 through 1.10 of the questionnaire, "What is your personal reaction to charter schools?"

Attitudes towards charter school implementation were addressed in questions 2.1 to 2.8, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Questions 3.1 to 3.10 provided possible reasons "Why shouldn't charter be implemented in your school district?" Questions 4.1 to 4.11 asked for information about impact, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

Charter School Survey Responses

A five-point Likert rating scale was used to evaluate each item in the Charter School Survey. This rating scale progressed from one, indicating strong disagreement; two, representing disagreement; three as the neutral point; four indicating agreement, and five representing strong agreement. Total scores for each dependent variable were obtained by adding respondent ratings

of each item included within the section. Table 10 to Table 13 present frequency distributions for all item responses in the survey.

In Section I, 63% the sample strongly disagreed with item 1.1, "I am basically unaware of Charter Schools." Fifty-two percent of subjects were neutral in responding to item 1.5; "I am displeased with colleagues reactions to Charter Schools. A majority disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with all of the items in Section II, "Why should Charter Schools be implemented in your school district?" In Section IV, 58% of subjects strongly disagreed with item 4.11; "The effect of charter schools will be to increase available funds for traditional schools." Similarly, 51% disagreed with item 4.4; "The effect of charter schools will be to cause teachers to decrease the number of instructional strategies they employ." However, 58% of subjects agreed with item 4.8, "The effect of charter schools will benefit some students."

Table 10

Frequency Distribution Superintendent Survey: Section I

Section I: What Is Your Personal Reaction To Charter Schools?	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.1 I am basically unaware of Charter schools.	150	63.8	53	22.6	11	4.7	6	2.6	13	5.5
1.2 I am anticipating charter School implementation.	71	30.2	61	26.0	42	17.9	26	11.1	26	11.1
1.3 I am skeptical about charter schools.	13	5.5	22	9.4	48	20.4	78	33.2	72	30.6
1.4 I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	41	17.4	47	20.0	63	26.8	67	28.5	13	5.5
1.5 I am displeased with colleagues' reactions to charter schools.	24	10.2	41	17.4	123	52.3	32	13.6	11	4.7
1.6 I am not interested in charter schools.	34	14.5	62	26.4	51	21.7	47	20.0	37	15.7
1.7 I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	44	18.7	55	23.4	72	30.6	42	17.9	16	6.8
1.8 I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	42	17.9	51	21.7	82	34.9	39	16.6	10	4.3
1.9 I am not involved in charter schools.	29	12.3	37	15.7	27	11.5	73	31.1	66	28.1
1.10 I am too busy to think about charter schools.	61	26.0	69	29.4	58	24.7	28	11.9	16	6.8

Table 11

Frequency Distribution Superintendent Survey: Section II

Section II Why Should Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2.1 Charter schools should be implemented because it is time for fundamental change in education.	104	44.3	75	31.9	23	9.8	22	9.4	6	2.6
2.2 Charter schools should be implemented because the business community is demanding change in education.	112	47.7	86	36.6	28	11.9	6	2.6	1	.4
2.3 Charter schools should be implemented because parents are demanding change in education.	95	40.4	77	32.8	29	12.3	29	12.3	3	1.3
2.4 Charter schools should be implemented because they are an educational idea that makes sense.	86	36.6	60	25.5	50	21.3	32	13.6	4	1.7
2.5 Charter schools should be implemented because the current system is not working for many kids.	112	47.7	71	30.2	26	11.1	18	7.7	3	1.3
2.6 Charter schools should be implemented because they do not require additional funding.	145	61.7	67	28.5	18	7.7	2	.9	1	.4
2.7 Charter schools should be implemented because educators are dedicated to doing what is best for kids.	87	37.0	58	24.7	52	22.1	30	12.8	2	.9
2.8 Charter schools should be implemented because innovative programs are not available in traditional schools.	142	60.4	72	30.6	8	3.4	9	3.8	2	.9

Table 12

Frequency Distribution Superintendent Survey: Section III

Section III Why Shouldn't Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
3.1 Charter schools should not be implemented because they are not adequately funded.	23	9.8	45	19.1	44	18.7	57	24.3	63	26.8
3.2 Charter schools should not be implemented because they are of no interest to educational interest groups such as the NEA, NIEA, etc.	79	33.6	83	35.3	59	25.1	7	3.0	5	2.1
3.3 Charter schools should not be implemented because they are not a good idea for education.	26	11.1	48	20.4	75	31.9	46	19.6	40	17.0
3.4 Charter schools should not be implemented because they are unfair to some types of students.	22	9.4	39	16.6	58	24.7	69	29.4	47	20.0
3.5 Charter schools should not be implemented because they focus too much on needs of the business community.	26	11.1	81	34.5	93	39.6	22	9.4	12	5.1
3.6 Charter schools should not be implemented because they create too much change for school communities too fast.	48	20.4	97	41.3	63	26.8	19	8.1	6	2.6
3.7 Charter schools should not be implemented because colleges and universities may object to them as a public school alternative.	66	28.1	96	40.9	59	25.1	8	3.4	4	1.7
3.8 Charter schools should not be implemented because they may cause difficulties for students transferring to other schools.	43	18.3	84	35.7	65	27.7	31	13.2	11	4.7
3.9 Charter schools should not be implemented because they are a fad.	40	17.0	71	30.2	65	27.7	47	20.0	12	5.1
3.10 Charter schools should not be implemented because gifted and talented students may leave the traditional system.	39	16.6	91	38.7	52	22.1	41	17.4	11	4.7

Table 13

Frequency Distribution Superintendent Survey: Section IV

Section IV What Will Be The Effects Of Charter Schools In Your School District?	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
4.1 The effect of charter schools will be increased parental involvement.	41	17.4	81	34.5	64	27.2	42	17.9	5	2.1
4.2 The effect of charter schools will be greater parental choice of academic environments for their children.	22	9.4	49	20.9	47	20.0	102	43.4	15	6.4
4.3 The effect of charter schools will be to decrease teacher decision-making in instructional programming in all schools.	48	20.4	107	45.5	62	26.4	13	5.5	4	1.7
4.4 The effect of charter schools will be to cause teachers to decrease the number of instructional strategies they employ.	61	26.0	120	51.1	41	17.4	9	3.8	2	.9
4.5 The effect of charter schools will be decreased teacher, parent, and administrator collaboration in decision-making.	60	25.5	112	47.7	49	20.9	10	4.3	3	1.3
4.6 The effect of charter schools will be increased teacher collegiality.	37	15.7	77	32.8	95	40.4	20	8.5	5	2.1
4.7 The effect of charter schools will be less curriculum integration.	42	17.9	86	36.6	71	30.2	30	12.8	5	2.1
4.8 The effect of charter schools will benefit some students.	10	4.3	12	5.1	55	23.4	138	58.7	19	8.1
4.9 The effect of charter schools will be diverse ways of organizing or grouping students for learning.	20	8.5	56	23.8	88	37.4	63	26.8	4	1.7
4.10 The effect of charter schools will be to decrease business community involvement.	33	14.0	87	37.0	108	46.0	4	1.7	1	.4
4.11 The effect of charter schools will be to increase available funds for traditional schools.	138	58.7	49	20.9	29	12.3	10	4.3	9	3.8

Reliability and Validity

Ogden (1995) originally developed a 49-item survey to measure attitudes toward charter schools in Michigan. Sperling (1999) added 14 additional items to Ogden's original survey, for a total of 63 items. In this study, Ogden's original instrument was used, with only minimal changes, in order to make the questionnaire applicable and relevant for superintendents in the State of New Jersey.

Expert reviewers established the "face validity" of Ogden's original survey in 1995. Therefore, the revised survey used in this study was distributed to New Jersey colleagues, active in the charter school reform movement, for comments and revision. The integrity of the original instrument was preserved in order to permit comparisons between the results of this study and the results of Ogden (1995).

Respondents in this study were also invited to provide comments regarding charter schools and their effect on public schools in New Jersey. These unedited comments are listed in Appendix F. Most of these comments reiterate attitudes described in survey items, providing additional evidence for the face validity of the Charter School Survey questionnaire that was used in this study.

The "reliability" of the Ogden's original survey was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, an index of the internal consistency of responses between and among items. Ogden (1995) reported Coefficient Alpha = 0.89 for 49 items and Sperling 1999 reported Coefficient Alpha = .89 for 63 items.

In Table 14, Coefficient Alpha = 0.776 for the 39 item survey used in this study. It should also be noted that Section I, with Coefficient Alpha = 0.300, had little internal consistency. For

this reason, items in Section I were considered separately in all subsequent analysis. Coefficient Alpha for Section II was 0.898, for Section III was 0.834, and for Section IV was 0.795. Neither Ogden (1995), nor Sperling (1999) reported Coefficient Alpha for any of the sections in the Charter School Survey.

Table 14

Reliability Analysis of Survey Responses

	Sample Size	Section Mean	Section Std.	N Items	Alpha
Total Survey	202	97.14	12.5	39	.776
Section I: Personal Reactions to Charter Schools.	215	27.71	4.37	10	.300
Section II: Why Should Charter Schools Be Implemented?	224	14.64	5.87	8	.898
Section III: Why Shouldn't Charter Schools Be Implemented?	230	26.63	6.79	10	.834
Section IV: Effects of Charter Schools.	227	27.58	5.90	11	.795

Procedures

Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research gave permission to conduct this anonymous survey and approved the survey packet. The packet consisted of a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of the completed form. The cover letter introduced the researcher and stated his affiliation with Seton Hall University. A brief description of the project, a request for voluntary participation,

and the guarantee of anonymity for respondents were highlighted. Subjects were asked to return the completed survey within two weeks. A reminder letter and an additional copy of the survey were sent to all subjects who failed to respond to the first mailing. Five weeks following the initial distribution of the surveys, data collection was considered complete (See Appendix G).

The design of this study was exploratory. Three Research questions guided the analysis of data: "What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey? Are there differences in perceptions of public school superintendents who have a charter school operating, or in the planning stages, and those of public school superintendents whose district have no plans for a charter school? Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other selected descriptive variables?" SPSS Version 9.0 for Windows was used to analyze the data. All decisions regarding statistical significance were made using an alpha level of .05. See table 15 on page 46 for a summary plan of the data analysis.

As previously noted, this study was limited to only one of many significant stakeholders in the charter school movement: public school superintendents in state of New Jersey during the summer of 2000. It was assumed that the district superintendents actually completed the anonymous surveys used in this study, rather than delegating the task to other district staff. The data analysis was descriptive of respondents only, and could not be generalized to the hypothetical population of all public school superintendents in New Jersey. Finally, correlational findings did not imply causation: interpretation of results may be better explained by sampling and survey bias or other unknown and uncontrolled variables.

Summary

The survey packet was mailed to 556 public school superintendents in the State of New Jersey. Two hundred thirty-four superintendents (N=234) returned completed questionnaires, a 42.4% return rate. A majority of respondents described themselves as knowledgeable about charter schools and about the New Jersey Charter School Act of 1995.

School districts in this study were similar to public school districts in New Jersey relative to District Type, DFG Rating, and Student Enrollment. Similarly, school districts in this sample were comparable to school districts in the State of New Jersey in terms of budget in millions and school tax rate.

Most survey respondents had no direct experience with charter schools; these districts were not sending any students or dollars to charter schools. However, public school districts with charter schools, or in the planning stages, were well represented in this study. Some districts had already allocated more than one million dollars to send public school students to charter schools.

The non-experimental research design used in this study cannot be used to make inferences about non-responders. However, all New Jersey superintendents were invited to participate. Sample data was compared to public information describing New Jersey school districts whenever possible. The survey instrument was selected and preserved to allow comparisons to previous studies.

Table 15

Plan for Data Analysis

Research Question	Variables	Statistical Analysis
1. What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey?	<u>Dependent Variables:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal reaction to charter schools • Implementation of charter schools • Non-implementation of charter schools • Effects of charter schools 	One-sample T-tests will be used to measure perceptions of charter schools against the neutral point.
2. Are there differences in perceptions of public school superintendents who have a charter school operating or in the planning stages, and those of public school superintendents whose district have no plans for a charter school?	<u>Dependent Variables:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal reaction to charter schools • Implementation of charter schools • Non-implementation of charter schools • Effects of charter Schools <u>Independent Variable:</u> Charter School Presence	T-test for independent samples will be used to test for differences in charter school presence on each of the sections.
3. Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other selected descriptive variables?	<u>Dependent Variables:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal reaction to charter schools • Implementation of charter schools • Non-implementation of charter schools • Effects of charter Schools <u>Descriptive Variables:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorical • Continuous 	Correlation coefficients will be used to identify relationships between perceptions of charter schools and the descriptive variables.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A dichotomous independent variable, created for this study, was called Charter School Presence. School districts operating charter schools ($n = 27$) were combined with school districts in the planning stages for charter schools ($n = 13$). These school districts had Charter School Presence ($N = 40$). School districts reporting little or no involvement with charter schools had No Charter School Presence ($N = 193$).

The four dependent variables in this study were perceptions toward charter schools. These attitudes were assessed in the survey instrument and are as follows: Section I: "What is your personal reaction to charter schools?" Section II: "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Section III: "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Section IV: "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

Three research questions guided the analysis of data: "What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey? Are there differences in perceptions of superintendents who have a charter school operating, or in the planning stages, and those of public school superintendents whose district have no plans for a charter school? Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other selected descriptive variables?"

Research Question I: Significant Perceptions

The first research question in this study was "What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey?" The dependent variables included responses to each of ten items in Section I, "What is your personal reaction to charter schools?" Total scores were used to evaluate Section II, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" and Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

A one-sample t-test was used to measure perceptions of charter schools against a neutral point. The null hypothesis under test was "No significant differences exist between the test value, representing the neutral point, and the mean score of survey respondents." The null hypothesis was rejected for a two-tailed significance level less than $p = .05$. An average score, significantly above the neutral point, was interpreted as "agreement" with an item, or a section of the survey. An average score, significantly below the neutral point, indicated disagreement with the item, or the section under test.

Personal Reaction to Charter Schools

Ten items in Section I present personal reactions to charter schools. (Each item is evaluated separately because the reliability of Section I, "What is your personal reaction to charter schools," was low.) The neutral point for each item was set at test value = 3.0. The mean score for each item was compared to the test value using a one sample t-test. The significance level for the two-tailed test was set at .05.

As can be seen from Table 16, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.1, "I am basically unaware of charter schools," $t = -19.379$, $df = 231$. The average survey

respondent disagreed with item 1.1, mean $x = 1.63$ and $sd = 1.08$. The null hypothesis was also rejected at the .05 level for item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," $t = -6.341$, $df = 224$. The average survey respondent disagreed with item 1.2, mean $x = 2.44$ and $sd = 1.34$. The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.3, "I am skeptical about charter schools," $t = 9.869$, $df = 231$. However, the average respondent agreed with item 1.3, mean $x = 3.75$ with $sd = 1.16$. Thus the average respondent was aware of charter schools, and was skeptical, but was not anticipating charter school implementation in his/her own district.

The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level of significance for item 1.4, "I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting," $t = -2.060$, $df = 229$ and for item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues' reactions to charter schools." $t = -2.538$, $df = 229$. The average survey respondent disagreed with both of these statements. The mean for item 1.4 was identical to the mean of item 1.5, $x = 2.84$. However, the standard deviation for item 1.4, $sd = 1.18$, was larger than the standard deviation for item 1.5, $sd = 0.94$. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected for item 1.6; "I am not interested in charter schools." $t = -.506$, $df = 229$. Thus, the average subject was not displeased with the reaction of colleagues, and was not "waiting to see" how charter schools perform before reacting.

The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.7, "I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools," $t = -3.855$, $df = 227$. The average survey respondent disagreed with item 1.7, mean $x = 2.70$ and $sd = 1.17$. The null hypothesis was also rejected at the .05 level for item 1.8, "I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded," $t = -4.556$, $df = 222$. The average survey respondent disagreed with item 1.8, mean $x = 2.66$ and $sd = 1.10$. Thus the average respondent was not

pleased with the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools, and was not going to wait until charter schools were adequately funded to take them seriously.

The null hypothesis was also rejected at the .05 level for item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $t = 5.164$, $df = 230$. The average respondent agreed with item 1.9, mean $x = 3.47$ and $sd = 1.38$. Finally, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $t = -7.062$, $df = 230$. The average survey respondent disagreed with item 1.10, mean $x = 2.45$ and $sd = 1.19$. Thus the average subject was not involved with charter schools, but was not "too busy" to think about charter schools.

Implementation of Charter Schools

Eight items in Section II of the superintendent's survey provided reasons for implementing charter schools within the district. Responses to each item in Section II were added together to create a total score for Section II because the reliability of Section II was satisfactory. (The statistical test for reliability on Section II produced an alpha coefficient of 0.898.) The neutral point for Section II was set at test value = 24.0, assuming a value of 3.0 for all eight items in Section II. The mean score for Section II was compared to the test value using a "One Sample T-test". Results for Section II are presented in Table 17.

As can be seen from Table 17, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for Section II, "Implementation of Charter Schools," $t = -23.63$, $df = 222$. Survey respondents disagreed with the reasons provided in Section II to justify the implementation of charter schools in their own school districts, mean $x = 14.70$, $sd = 5.87$.

Table 16

One-Sample T-test (Test Value = 3) Section I

Section I What Is Your Personal Reaction To Charter Schools?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	df	Sig. (2-tailed) p
1.1 I am basically unaware of Charter schools.	232	1.63	1.08	-19.379	231	.000 *
1.2 I am anticipating charter School implementation.	225	2.44	1.34	-6.341	224	.000 *
1.3 I am skeptical about charter schools.	232	3.75	1.16	9.869	231	.000 *
1.4 I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	230	2.84	1.18	-2.060	229	.040 *
1.5 I am displeased with colleagues' reactions to charter schools.	230	2.84	.94	-2.538	229	.012 *
1.6 I am not interested in charter schools.	230	2.96	1.30	-.506	229	.614
1.7 I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	228	2.70	1.17	-3.855	227	.000 *
1.8 I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	223	2.66	1.10	-4.556	222	.000 *
1.9 I am not involved in charter schools.	231	3.47	1.38	5.164	230	.000 *
1.10 I am too busy to think about charter schools.	231	2.45	1.19	-7.062	230	.000 *

*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails).

Table 17

One-Sample T-test (Test Value = 24.0) Section II

Section II	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	df	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Why Should Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?	223	14.7040	5.8727	-23.638	222	.000 *

*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails)

Non-Implementation of Charter Schools

Ten items in Section III of the superintendent's survey provided reasons why charter schools should not be implemented. Responses to each item in Section III were added together to create a total score for Section III because the reliability of Section III was satisfactory (Coefficient Alpha = 0.834). The neutral point for Section III was set at test value = 30.0, assuming a value of 3.0 for all ten items in Section III. The mean score for Section III was compared to the test value using a "One Sample T-test". As can be seen from Table 18, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for Section III, "Non-implementation of Charter Schools," "t = -7.496, df = 228. Survey respondents disagreed with Section III, reasons presented for non-implementation of charter schools in their own school districts, mean \bar{x} = 26.63, sd = 6.79.

Table 18

One-Sample T-test (Test Value = 30.0) Section III

Section III	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	df	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>P</i>
Why Shouldn't Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?	229	26.6332	6.7969	-7.496	228	.000 *

*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails).

Effects of Charter Schools

Eleven items in Section IV of the superintendent's survey presented the possible consequences of charter school implementation in the respondent's school district. Responses to each item in Section IV were added together to create a total score for Section IV because the reliability of this section was satisfactory (Coefficient Alpha = 0.795). The neutral point for Section IV was set at test value = 33.0, assuming a value of 3.0 for all eleven items in Section IV. The mean score for Section IV was compared to the test value using a "One Sample T-test". As can be seen from Table 19, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for Section IV, "Effects of Charter School Implementation," $t = -13.704$, $df = 225$. Survey respondents disagreed with Section IV, Effects of charter school implementation in their own school districts, mean $x = 27.60$, $sd = 5.92$.

Table 19

One-Sample T-test (Test Value = 33.0) Section IV

Section IV	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	df	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
What Will Be The Effects Of Charter Schools In Your School District?	226	27.6018	5.9218	-13.704	225	.000 *

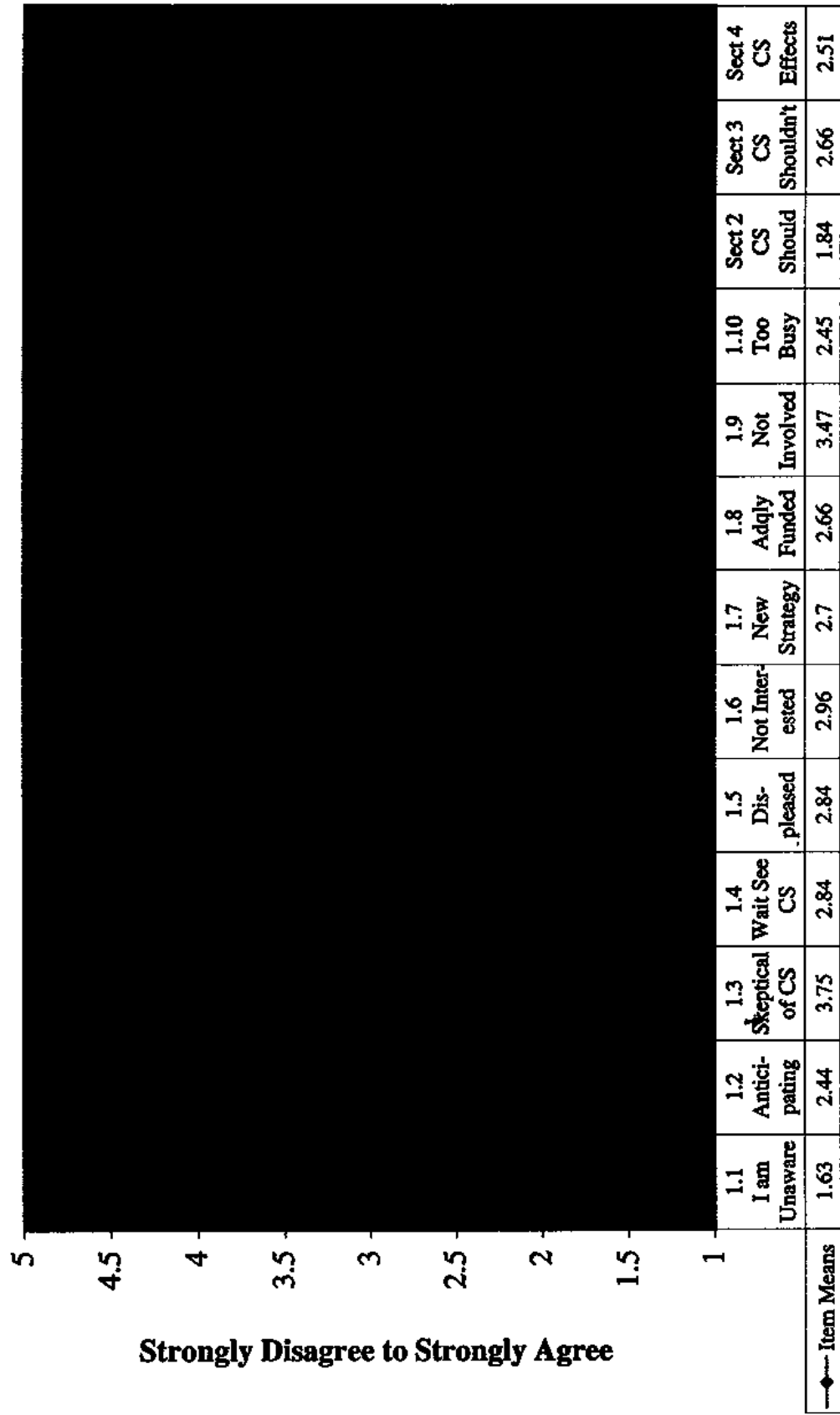
*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails).

Summary of Research Question I: Significant Perceptions

The first research question in this study was "What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey?" In brief, the results of the data analysis showed that district superintendents in this study were aware of charter schools, and were skeptical, but they were "not involved." Although respondents were not anticipating charter school implementation, they were not "too busy" to think about charter schools, and they did not agree with the rationale for charter school implementation provided in the Survey.

Figure 1 provides a summary of these research findings in visual format. In order to compare responses across sections of the survey, the Section II mean, $x = 14.70$, was divided by eight, the number of items in Section II. The Section III mean, $x = 26.63$, was divided by ten, the number of items in Section III. The Section IV mean, $x = 27.60$, was divided by eleven, the number of items in Section IV.

Figure 1: Perceptions of Respondents



Dependent Variables

Average responses to all dependent variables were statistically different from the neutral point with one exception: the average response to item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools" was neutral. Average respondents agreed with item 1.3, "I am skeptical about charter schools," and with item 1.9, "I am not involved with charter schools."

Average respondents disagreed with all remaining items in Section I, and with Section II, Section III, and Section IV of the survey. Specifically, subjects disagreed with Section II, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Average respondent also disagreed with item 1.1, "I am basically unaware of charter schools," item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," and item 10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools."

Remaining means were statistically significant, indicating disagreement, but actual values were quite close to the neutral point: Subjects disagreed with item 1.4, "I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting," and with item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues' reactions to charter schools." Subjects also disagreed with item 1.7, "I am pleased to try new academic strategies like charter schools," and with item 1.8, "I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded." Finally subjects disagreed with Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" and with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

Research Question II: Significant Differences

The second research question evaluated the effect of Charter School Presence on perceptions of respondents. The mean and standard deviation for public school districts with Charter School Presence, $N = 40$, was compared to the mean and standard deviation of school

districts without Charter School Presence ($N = 192$). The dependent variables in this study included the ten items in Section I, "Personal reaction to charter schools," and total scores for Section II, "Reasons to implement charter schools;" Section III, "Reasons not to implement charter schools, " and Section IV, "The effects of charter schools."

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance was used to test the null hypothesis that group variances were equal. When the probability value for Levene's F was less than $p = 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected, and an Independent Samples T -test was reported assuming unequal variance. In all other cases, equal variance was assumed for the Independent Samples T -tests. The Independent Samples T -test was conducted to identify significant mean differences in Charter School Presence for each of the dependent variables in this study. The null hypothesis under test was "There are no significant differences in perceptions between superintendents operating or planning charter schools ($N = 40$) and perceptions of superintendents who have no charter school involvement ($N = 192$)." The null hypothesis was rejected for a two-tailed significance level less than $p = .05$.

Differences in Personal Reaction

The ten items in Section I of the superintendent's survey described personal reactions to charter schools. The significance level for the two-tailed test was set at $p = .05$. The independent variable was Charter School Presence. A comparison of means and standard deviations for items in Section I is reported in Table 20. Levene's Test for Equality of Variance and the results of the Independent Samples T -tests are reported in Table 21.

As can be seen from Table 21, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.1, "I am unaware of charter schools," $t = -3.850$, $df = 89.3$. The forty survey respondents operating or planning charter schools strongly disagreed with item 1.1, mean $x = 1.20$ and $sd = 0.69$, as compared with 191 superintendents who have no charter school involvement, who disagreed with item 1.1, mean $x = 1.72$ and $sd = 1.12$. Subjects with charter school presence were more aware of charter schools.

Similarly, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," $t = 3.710$, $df = 46.03$. The thirty eight survey respondents operating or planning charter schools were more likely to agree with item 1.2, mean $x = 3.26$ and $sd = 1.59$, and the 186 superintendents who have no charter school presence were more likely to disagree with item 1.2, mean $x = 2.25$ and $sd = 1.20$. Subjects with charter school presence were more likely to anticipate charter school development in their district.

The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools," $t = -1.991$, $df = 227$. The thirty nine survey respondents operating or planning charter schools were more likely to disagree with item 1.6, mean $x = 2.59$ and $sd = 1.45$, and the 190 subjects with no plans for charter schools were more neutral, mean $x = 3.04$ and $sd = 1.26$. Subjects with charter school presence were interested in charter schools. †

Table 20

Charter School Presence and Section I: Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations

Section I: What Is Your Personal Reaction To Charter Schools?	Charter School Presence	N	Mean	Std. Div.
1.1 I am unaware of charter schools.	charter operating or planned	40	1.20	.69
	no planned charter	191	1.72	1.12
1.2 I am anticipating charter school implementation.	charter operating or planned	38	3.26	1.59
	no planned charter	186	2.25	1.20
1.3 I am skeptical about charter schools.	charter operating or planned	39	3.85	1.27
	no planned charter	192	3.74	1.12
1.4 I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	charter operating or planned	40	2.58	1.30
	no planned charter	189	2.90	1.15
1.5 I am displeased with colleagues' reactions to charter schools.	charter operating or planned	40	3.03	1.10
	no planned charter	189	2.80	.89
1.6 I am not interested in charter schools.	charter operating or planned	39	2.59	1.45
	no planned charter	190	3.04	1.26
1.7 I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	charter operating or planned	39	2.64	1.35
	no planned charter	188	2.70	1.12
1.8 I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	charter operating or planned	36	2.50	1.36
	no planned charter	186	2.69	1.04
1.9 I am not involved in charter schools.	charter operating or planned	40	2.90	1.17
	no planned charter	190	3.81	1.17
1.10 I am too busy to think about charter schools.	charter operating or planned	40	1.78	1.25
	no planned charter	190	2.59	1.13

The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $t = -9.342$, $df = 228$. The forty survey respondents operating or planning charter schools were more likely to disagree with item 1.9, mean $x = 1.90$ and $sd = 1.17$, and the 190 superintendents who have no charter school involvement were more likely to agree with item 1.9, mean $x = 3.81$ and $sd = 1.17$. Subjects with charter school presence were more involved with charter schools.

Finally, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $t = -4.089$, $df = 228$. The forty survey respondents operating or planning charter schools disagreed more strongly with item 1.10, mean $x = 1.78$ and $sd = 1.25$, than the 190 superintendents who have no charter school involvement, item 1.10 mean $x = 2.59$ and $sd = 1.13$. Subjects with charter school presence were not "too busy to think about charter schools."

The null hypothesis failed to be rejected for remaining items in Section I. There were no significant differences in the responses of subjects with Charter School Presence and subjects with No Charter School Presence for item 1.3, "I am basically skeptical;" and item 1.4, "I will wait and see how charter school perform before reacting." Similarly, there were no significant differences in Charter School Presence for item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues reaction;" item 1.7, "I am pleased to try charter schools;" and item 1.8, "I will take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded."

Table 21

Independent Samples T-tests Charter School Presence and Section I

Section I What Is Your Personal Reaction To Charter Schools?		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		T-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	
1.1	I am unaware of charter schools.	Equal variances not assumed	16.059	.000 *	-3.850	89.302	.000 *
1.2	I am anticipating charter school implementation.	Equal variances not assumed	12.728	.000 *	3.710	46.030	.001 *
1.3	I am skeptical about charter schools.	Equal variances assumed	.937	.334	.503	229	.616
1.4	I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	Equal variances assumed	3.227	.074	-1.611	227	.109
1.5	I am displeased with colleagues' reactions to charter schools.	Equal variances assumed	.417	.519	1.393	227	.165
1.6	I am not interested in charter schools.	Equal variances assumed	3.342	.069	-1.991	227	.048 *
1.7	I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	Equal variances not assumed	3.974	.047*	-.265	49.508	.792
1.8	I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	Equal variances not assumed	7.634	.006*	-.785	43.309	.437
1.9	I am not involved in charter schools.	Equal variances assumed	.000	.995	-9.342	228	.000 *
1.10	I am too busy to think about charter schools.	Equal variances assumed	.040	.841	-4.089	228	.000*

*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails).

Implementation of Charter Schools

Eight items in Section II of the superintendent's survey provided reasons for implementing charter schools within the respondent's school district. Responses to each item in Section II were added together to create a total score for Section II because the reliability of Section II was satisfactory.

The significance level for the two-tailed test was set at $p = .05$ and an Independent Samples T-test were conducted. The independent variable was Charter School Presence. A comparison of means and standard deviations for Section II is reported in Table 22. Levene's Test for Equality of Variance and the results of the Independent Samples T-tests are reported in Table 23.

Table 22

Charter School Presence and Section II: Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations

Section II	Charter School Presence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Why Should Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?	Charter operating or planned	38	14.42	6.59
	No charter schools	185	14.76	5.73

Table 23

Independent Samples T-test Charter School Presence and Section II

Section II Why Should Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Section II	Equal variances assumed	2.473	.117	-.325	221	.745

*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails).

The null hypothesis failed to be rejected at the .05 level of significance for Section II, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" There were no significant differences in the ratings of Section II for superintendents operating or planning charter schools (N = 40) and the ratings of superintendents with no charter school involvement.

Non-Implementation of Charter Schools

Ten items in Section III of the superintendent's survey provided reasons why charter schools should not be implemented. Responses to items in Section III were added together to create a total score for each respondent because the reliability of Section III was satisfactory.

The significance level for the two-tailed test was set at $p = .05$ and an Independent Samples T-test were conducted. The independent variable was Charter School Presence. A comparison of means and standard deviations for Section III is reported in Table 24. Levene's Test for Equality of Variance and the results of the Independent Samples T-tests are reported in Table 25.

The null hypothesis failed to be rejected at the .05 level of significance for Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" There were no significant differences in the ratings of Section III for superintendents operating or planning charter schools (N = 40) and the ratings of superintendents with no charter school involvement (N = 192)." All subjects disagreed with the ten responses offered to the question, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?"

Table 24

Charter School Presence and Section III: Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations

Section III	Charter School Presence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Why Shouldn't Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?	Charter operating or planned	39	26.03	7.30
	No charter schools	189	26.83	6.64

Table 25

Independent Samples T-test Charter School Presence and Section III

Section III Why Shouldn't Charter Schools Be Implemented In Your School District?		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Section III	Equal variances assumed	.512	.475	-.677	226	.499

*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails).

Effects of Charter Schools

Eleven items in Section IV of the superintendent's survey presented the possible consequences of charter school implementation within the respondent's school district. Responses to each item in Section IV were added together to create a total score for Section IV because the reliability of Section IV was satisfactory.

The significance level for the two-tailed test was set at $p = .05$. The independent variable was Charter School Presence. An Independent Samples T-test was conducted. A comparison of means and standard deviations for Section IV is reported in Table 26 on page 70. Levene's Test for Equality of Variance and the results of the Independent Samples T-tests are reported in Table 27. The null hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level for Section IV, "What will be the effects of Charter Schools in your district," $t = -3.549$, $df = 223$. The thirty seven survey respondents operating or planning charter schools disagreed more strongly with Section IV, "The effects of charter school," mean $x = 24.51$ and $sd = 6.38$, as compared with the 188 superintendents who have no charter school involvement, Section IV, mean $x = 28.21$ and $sd = 5.67$.

Table 26

Charter School Presence and Section IV: Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations

Section IV	Charter School Presence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
What Will Be The Effects Of Charter Schools In Your School District?	Charter operating or planned	37	24.51	6.38
	No charter schools	188	28.21	5.67

Table 27

Independent Samples T-test Charter School Presence and Section IV

Section IV What Will Be The Effects Of Charter Schools In Your School District		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Section IV	Equal variances assumed	2.346	.127	-3.549	223	.000*

*Probability is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails).

Summary of Research Question II: Significant Differences

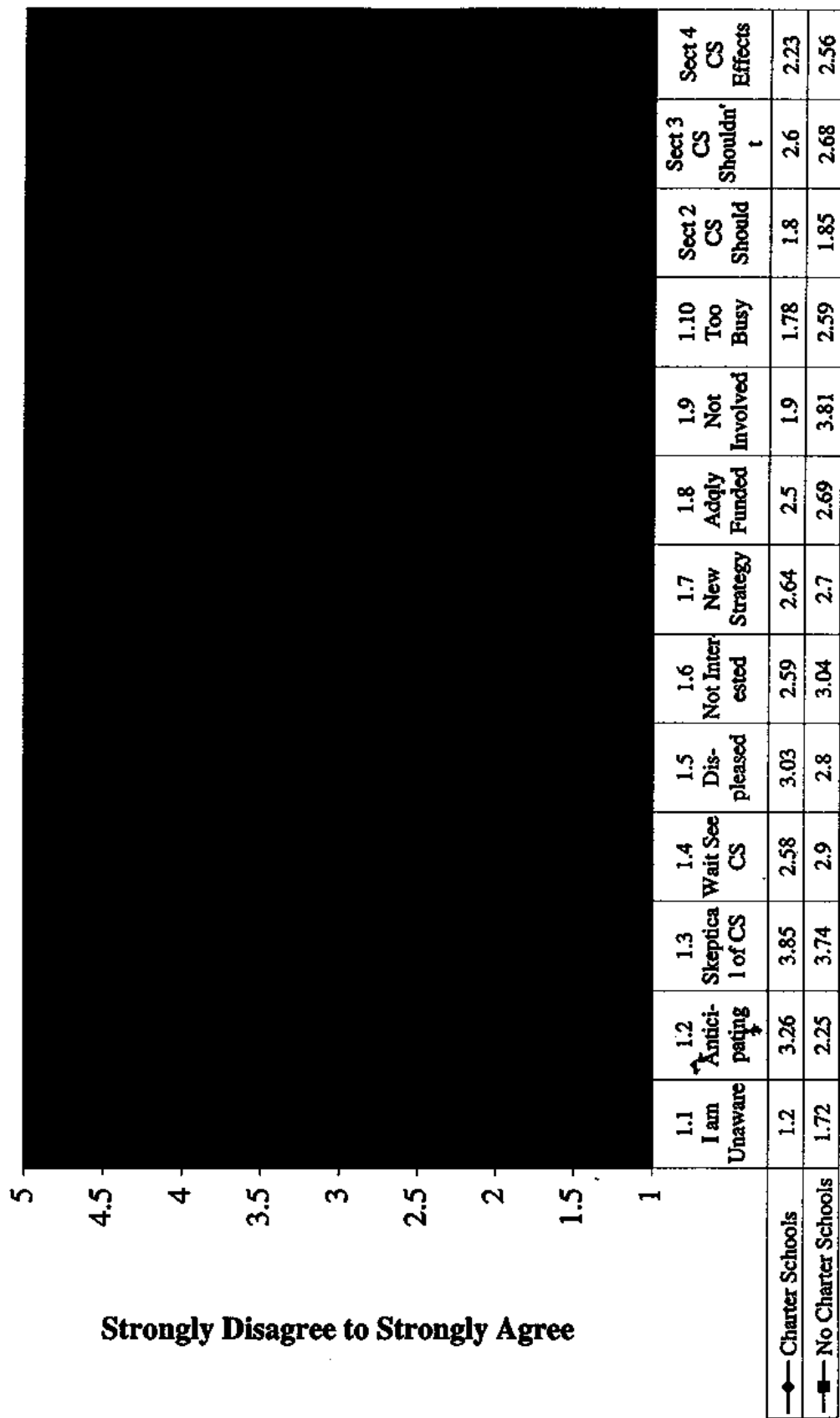
The second research question in this study was "Are there differences in perceptions of superintendents who have a charter school operating, or in the planning stages, and those of public school superintendents whose district have no plans for a charter school?" In brief, the results of the data analysis showed that districts with charter school presence were more aware, more interested, more involved, and were more likely to be "anticipating" charter school development than those without charter schools. Respondents with charter school presence were not "too busy to think about charter schools," and disagreed more strongly with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

Figure 2 provides a summary of these research findings in visual format. In order to compare responses across sections of the survey, the Section II means were divided by eight, the number of items in Section II. The Section III means were divided by ten, the number of items in Section III. The Section IV means were divided by eleven, the number of items in Section IV.

Statistically significant, mean differences were greatest for item 1.9 and for item 1.2. Districts with charter schools disagreed with item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," and districts without charter schools agreed. Districts with charter school presence agreed with item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," and subjects without charter schools disagreed. Other statistically significant mean differences included the following irrespective of charter school presence: subjects disagreed with item 1.1, item 1.10, and with Section IV of the survey. However, subjects with charter school presence disagreed more strongly with item 1.1, "I am unaware of charter schools," with item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," and with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your district?" Subjects with

charter schools also disagreed with item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools," but subjects without charter schools were neutral. There were no other statistically significant differences in perceptions based on charter school presence.

Figure 2: Differences Between Respondents



Dependent Variables

Research Question III: Significant Relationships

The third research question in this study was, "Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other descriptive variables?" In order to address this question, correlation coefficients were calculated between the dependent variables measured by responses to Part I of the Superintendents Survey and the descriptive variables collected in Part II of the Superintendent Survey.

Ten descriptive variables provided information about respondents and their school districts: six categorical variables and four continuous variables. Personal reactions to charter schools were elicited by questions 1.1 through 1.10 of the questionnaire, "What is your personal reaction to charter schools?" Attitudes towards charter school implementation are addressed by total scores for Section II, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" and section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

Categorical Variables

Two categorical variables described respondents in this study: Self-rated Knowledge of Charter Schools and Self-rated knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. Spearman's Rho Correlation coefficients were used to identify significant, non-zero, relationships between categorical variables, and the Superintendents' Survey at the .05 level of significance. As can be seen in Table 28, there were significant, "non-zero correlation coefficients" at the .05 level between self-rated knowledge of charter schools, self-rated knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Act of 1995, and the dependent variables in this study.

It should be noted that both self-rated knowledge variables were scored "one" for "very good self-knowledge," "two" for "good self-knowledge," "three" for "not sure," "four" for "poor" self-knowledge, and "five" for "very poor" self-knowledge. Agreement with items was scored "one" for "strongly disagree," "two" for "disagree," "three" for "neutral," "four" for "agree," and "five" for "strongly agree." Thus positive relationships between self-knowledge variables and dependent variables were interpreted as follows: more knowledgeable respondents tended to disagree with stated items and less knowledgeable respondents tended to agree with stated items. See Table 28 for results of this analysis.

Table 28

Significant Relationships Between Self-rated Knowledge and Dependent Variables

Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficients		Self-rated Knowledge of Charter Schools	Self-rated Knowledge of Charter School Act
1.1 I am unaware of Charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.424* .000 229	.415* .000 229
1.2 I am anticipating charter School implementation.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.212* .002 222	-.212* .001 222
1.3 I am skeptical about charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.027 .683 229	-.059 .375 229
1.4 I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.293* .000 227	.283* .000 227
1.5 I am displeased with colleagues reactions.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.150* .023 227	-.132* .047 227
1.6 I am not interested in charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.079 .237 227	.056 .401 227
1.7 I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.048 .471 225	-.040 .550 225
1.8 I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.127 .060 220	.108 .109 220
1.9 I am not involved in charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.312* .000 228	.269* .000 228
1.10 I am too busy to think about charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.355* .000 228	.368* †.000 228
Section II: Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.097 .149 221	.183* .006 221
Section III: Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.118 .076 226	.100 .135 226
Section IV: What will be the effects of charter schools in your district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.277* .000 223	.320* .000 223

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Self-rated knowledge of charter schools was significantly correlated with the following items from Section I: item 1.1 "I am basically unaware of charter schools," $r = .424$; item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," $r = -.212$; item 1.4, "I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting," $r = .293$; item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues reactions to charter schools," $r = -.150$; item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $r = .312$; and item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $r = .355$. Self-rated knowledge of charter schools was also significantly correlated with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?" $r = .277$.

These results indicated that more knowledgeable subjects were more "aware," "anticipating" and "involved with charter schools" than less knowledgeable colleagues. They were not "waiting to see how charter schools turn out before forming an opinion," and they were not "too busy" to think about charter schools. They were more "displeased with colleagues' reactions", and tended to disagree with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

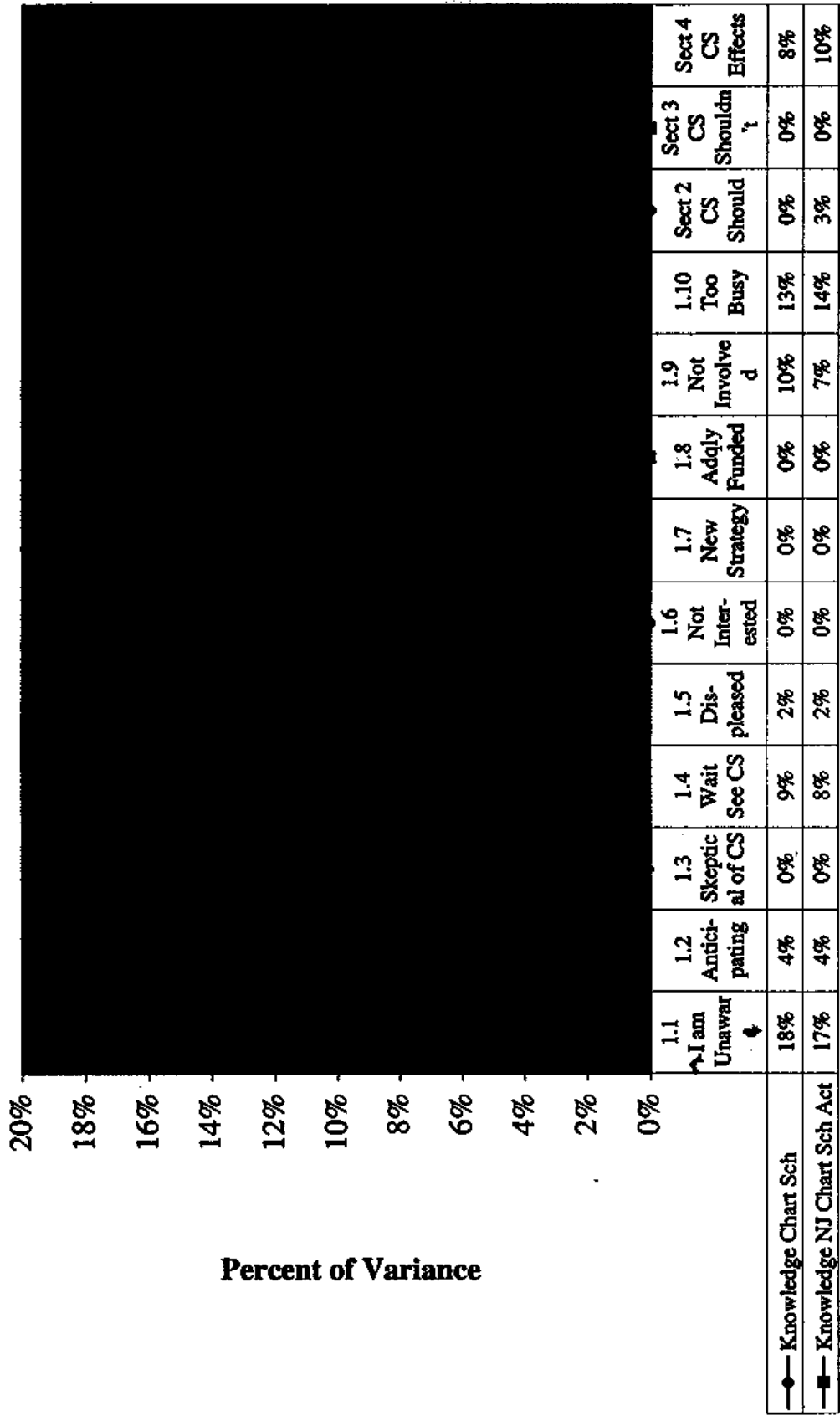
Self-rated knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 was also significantly correlated with the following items from Section I: item 1.1, "I am basically unaware of charter schools," $r = .415$; item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," $r = -.212$; item 1.4, "I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting," $r = .283$; item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues reactions to charter school," $r = -.132$; item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $r = .269$; and item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools, $r = .368$. Self-rated knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School

Program Act of 1995 was significantly correlated with Section II, $r = .183$, and with Section IV, $r = .320$.

These results indicated that subjects who were more knowledgeable of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 were also more "aware," "anticipating" and "involved with charter schools" than less knowledgeable colleagues. They were not "waiting to see how charter schools turn out before forming an opinion," and they were not "too busy" to think about charter schools, and they were more "displeased with colleagues' reactions." Similarly, subjects who were more knowledgeable of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 tended to disagree with Section II, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" and with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

The percent of variance explained by statistically significant, non-zero relationships between self-rated knowledge and dependent variables are presented in Figure 3. Self-rated Knowledge of Charter Schools and Self-rated Knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 had similar relationship patterns to the dependent variables in this study. Self-rated Knowledge of Charter Schools, and of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995, explained at least ten percent of the variance for item 1.1, "I am basically unaware of charter schools," and for item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools."

Figure 3: Self-Rated Knowledge



Dependent Variables

Three categorical variables were related to the financial needs and resources of school districts in this study: District Type, Student Enrollment, and DFG Rating, a measure of socioeconomic status. One categorical variable, Status of Charter Schools, was associated with charter school impact. Spearman's Rho correlation coefficients were used to identify significant, non-zero, relationships between categorical variables, and the Superintendents' Survey at the .05 level of significance (See Table 29).

There were no significant "non-zero" correlation coefficients at the .05 level between District Type and any of the dependent variables measuring perceptions of charter schools. District type was eliminated from further analysis in this study.

Student Enrollment was significantly correlated at the .05 level with item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $r = -.145$. Since student enrollment increased from a value of "one" for schools with less than 400 students, to a value of "five" for districts with over 3500 students, these results indicated that school districts with large school enrollments were not "too busy" to think about charter schools.

DFG Ratings were significantly related at the .05 level to item 1.7 of the survey, "I am pleased for the opportunity to try innovations such as charter schools," $r = -.134$. Lower socioeconomic status districts were more likely to be pleased, while higher socioeconomic status districts were more likely to be displeased with the opportunity to try charter schools. There was also a significant relationship between DFG Rating and Section III of the survey at the .05 level, $r = -.132$. School districts with lower socioeconomic status tended to agree with reasons why charter schools should not be implemented, and school districts with higher socioeconomic status, were more likely to disagree with Section III of the survey.

Table 29

Significant Relationships Between Categorical District Variables and Dependent Variables

Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficients		Student Enrollment	DFG	School District Type	Status of CS in District	
1.1	I am unaware of Charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.078 .238 229	-.097 .140 231	-.050 .455 225	.228* .000 231
1.2	I am anticipating charter School implementation.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.018 .793 222	.060 .371 224	.018 .789 218	-.244* .000 224
1.3	I am skeptical about charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.032 .635 229	.078 .240 231	.033 .625 225	-.044 .509 231
1.4	I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.090 .178 227	-.023 .728 229	-.033 .626 223	.097 .145 229
1.5	I am displeased with colleagues reactions.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.071 .284 227	-.062 .350 229	.089 .186 223	-.074 .266 229
1.6	I am not interested in charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.005 .942 227	.045 .494 229	-.002 .975 223	.139* .035 229
1.7	I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.031 .649 225	-.134* .044 227	.029 .667 221	.021 .751 227
1.8	I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.018 .795 220	.014 .833 222	.009 .896 216	.070 .301 222
1.9	I am not involved in charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.114 .087 228	.097 .144 230	-.016 .816 224	.491* .000 230
1.10	I am too busy to think about charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.145* .028 228	.032 .625 230	-.086 .199 224	.298* .000 230
Section II:	Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.041 .548 221	-.052 .436 223	-.131 .054 217	.029 .668 223
Section III:	Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.081 .223 226	-.132* .046 228	-.002 .975 222	.054 .415 228
Section IV:	What will be the effects of charter schools in your district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.046 .491 223	-.096 .150 225	-.032 .639 219	.200* .003 225

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

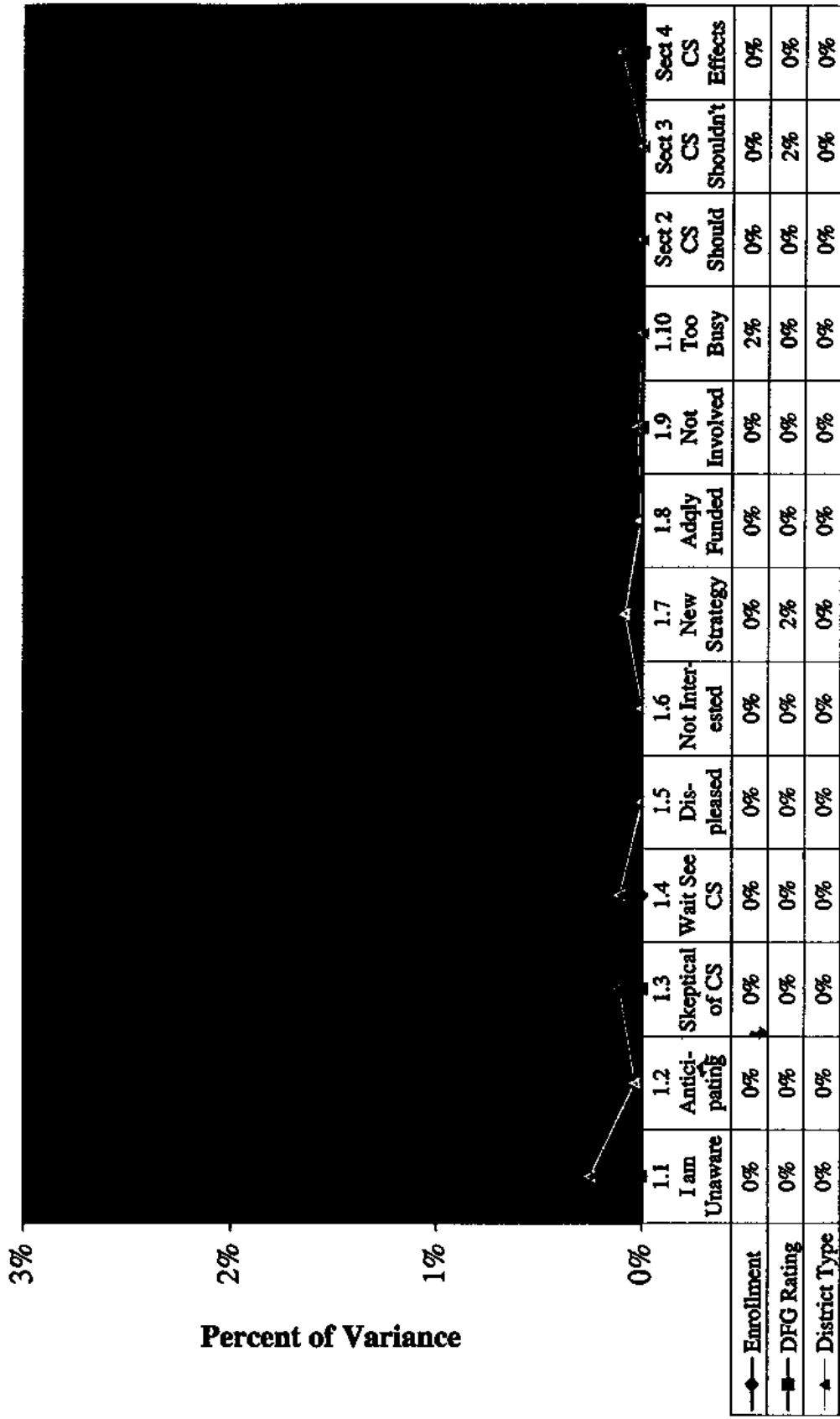
As can be seen in Figure 4. DFG ratings explained only two percent of the variance in item 1.7, "I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools," and Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Student enrollment explained only two percent of the variance in item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools."

Charter School Status was significantly correlated at the .05 level with the following items from Section I: item 1.1, "I am basically unaware of charter schools," $r = .228$; item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," $r = -.244$; item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools," $r = .139$; item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $r = .491$; and item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $r = .298$. Charter School Status was also significantly correlated with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?" $r = .200$.

The majority of respondents, who have no plans for charter schools, agreed that they were unaware, uninterested, uninvolved, and "too busy" to think about charter schools. Respondents who already have charter schools, or are in the planning stages tended to agree that they were "anticipating charter school implementation," but disagreed with Section IV of the survey, describing the effects of charter schools on the school district.

As can be seen in Figure 5, Charter School Status explained 24% of the variance in item 1.9, "I am not involved with charter schools," and nine percent of the variance in item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools." Charter School Status explained between four and six percent of the variance for items 1.1, "I am basically unaware of charter schools," item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," and Section IV of the survey, "What will be the

Figure 4: Categorical Financial Variables



Dependent Variables

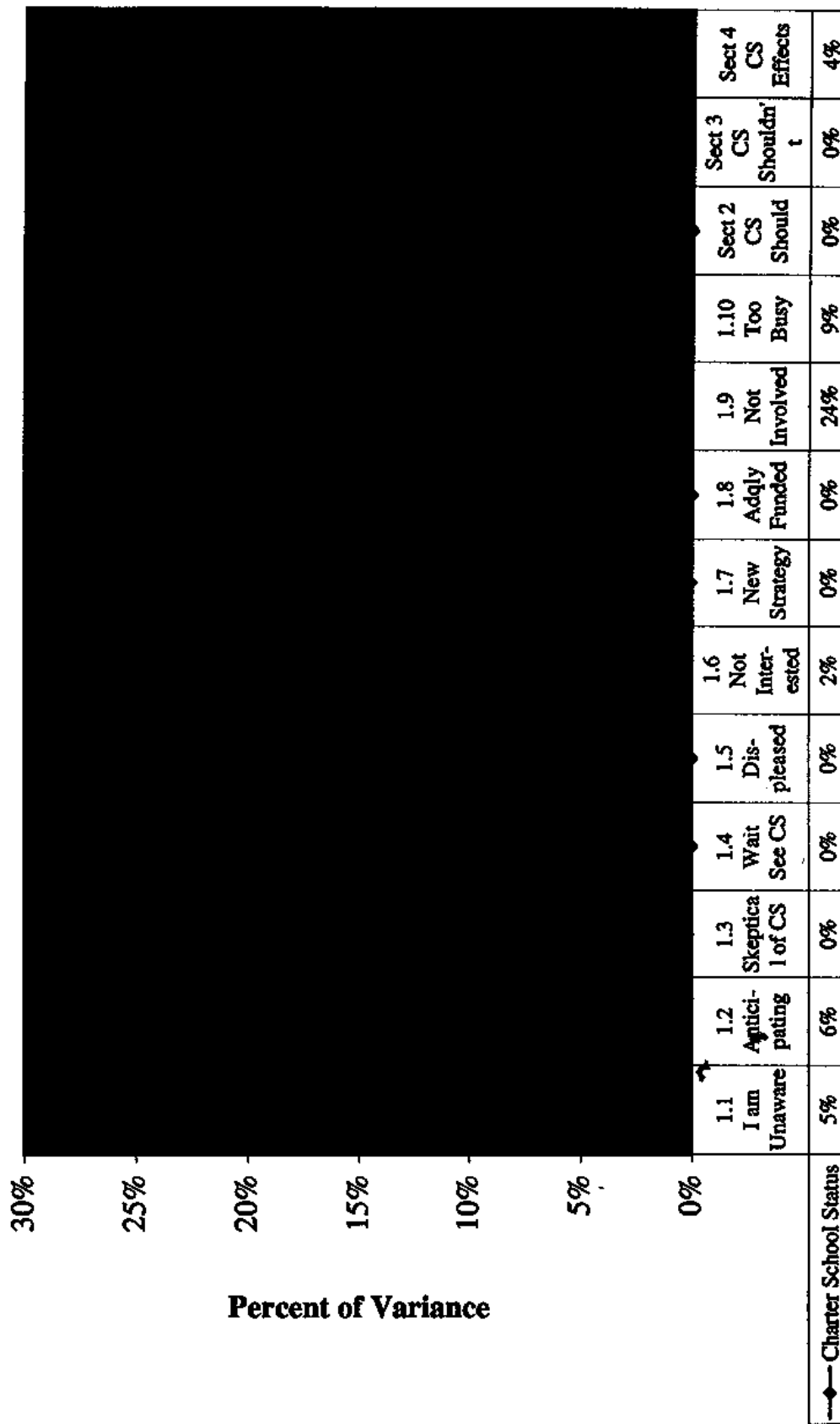
effects of charter school implementation in your district?" Finally, Charter School Status explained only two percent of the variance in item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools."

Continuous Variables

Two continuous variables describe the financial needs of school districts in this study: Budget in Millions for 1999-2000 and School Tax Rate. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were used to identify significant, "non-zero," relationships between continuous financial variables and the dependent variables at the .05 level of significance (See Table 30).

Budget in millions was significantly correlated at the $p = .05$ level for item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school development," $r = .151$; and with item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools," $r = -.142$. Budget in millions was also significantly correlated at the $p = .05$ level with the following: item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $r = -.229$; and item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $r = -.176$. School districts with larger budgets were anticipating charter school implementation. Districts with smaller budgets were less interested, less involved, and "too busy" to think about charter schools. There were no other significant relationships between District budgets and perceptions of charter schools.

Figure 5: Categorical Status Variable



Dependent Variables

Table 30

Significant Relationships Between Continuous Variables and Dependent Variables

Pearson Product Moment Correlation		Budget in Millions	School Tax Rate	# Students Sent to Charter School	Dollars Sent to Charter School	
1.1	I am unaware of Charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.031 .635 231	-.040 .545 231	-.076 .253 230	-.075 .256 231
1.2	I am anticipating charter School implementation.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.151* .024 224	.000 .999 224	.185* .006 224	.186* .005 224
1.3	I am skeptical about charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.056 .393 231	.056 .397 231	-.120 .068 230	-.121 .067 231
1.4	I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.010 .884 229	.135* .041 229	-.071 .289 228	-.052 .433 229
1.5	I am displeased with colleagues reactions.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.111 .093 229	.134* .042 229	.057 .393 228	.067 .311 229
1.6	I am not interested in charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.142* .032 229	.019 .772 229	-.173* .009 229	-.176* .008 229
1.7	I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.064 .340 227	-.006 .931 227	.108 .105 227	.105 .113 227
1.8	I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.088 .193 222	-.055 .413 222	.089 .187 221	.088 .191 222
1.9	I am not involved in charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.229* .000 230	.009 .896 230	-.236* .000 230	-.233* .000 230
1.10	I am too busy to think about charter schools.	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.176* .008 230	.031* .636 230	-.157* .017 230	-.155* .018 230
Section II:	Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.043 .522 223	-.002 .979 223	.142* .035 222	.142* .034 223
Section III:	Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.024 .718 228	.001 .986 228	-.096 .149 227	-.092 .167 228
Section IV:	What will be the effects of charter schools in your district?	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.025 .705 225	-.005 .937 225	-.010 .881 224	-.010 .887 225

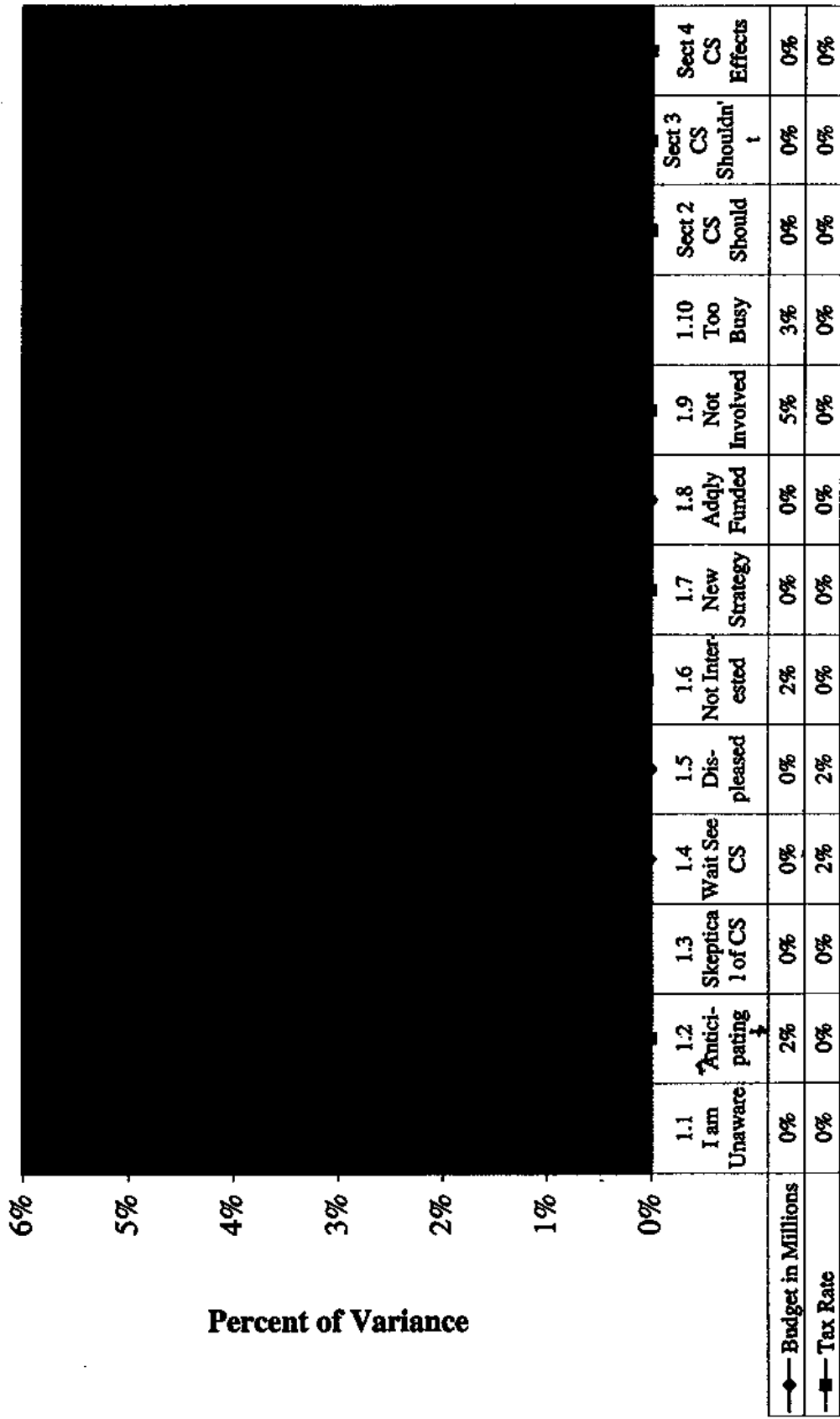
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tail).

School tax rate was significantly correlated at the .05 level with two items in Section I, "Personal reaction to charter school." Item 1.4, "I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting," $r = .135$; and Item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues reactions to charter schools," $r = .134$. As school tax rate increased, respondents tended to agree that they were "waiting to see how charter schools performed before reacting." Similarly, respondents with higher tax rates tended to agree that they were "displeased with colleagues reactions to charter schools." There were no other significant relationships between school tax rate and the dependent variables in this study.

As can be seen in Figure 6, Budget in Millions explained five percent of the variance in item 1.9, "I am not involved with charter schools," and three percent of the variance in item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools." Budget in millions explained two percent of the variance in item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation." Tax Rate explained two percent of the variance in item 1.4, "I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting," and item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues reactions to charter schools."

Two continuous variables described charter school impact: number of Students Sent and Dollars Sent to charter schools during the past year. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were used to identify significant, "non-zero," relationships between continuous demographic variables and the dependent variables at the .05 level of significance (See Table 30).

Figure 6: Continuous Financial Variables



Dependent Variables

The number of students sent to charter schools, Number Sent, was significantly correlated at the $p = .05$ level with the following items from Section I: item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," $r = .185$; item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools," $r = -.173$; and item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $r = -.236$. Number Sent was significantly correlated at the $p = .05$ level with item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $r = -.157$, and with Section II of the Survey, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your district?" $r = .142$.

As the number of students sent to charter schools increased, districts were more likely to anticipate charter school development and to be interested and involved in charter schools. These respondents were not "too busy" to think about charter schools. They also "disagreed less" with items in Section II of the survey, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" There were no other "non-zero relationships" between the number of students sent to charter schools and the Superintendents' Survey.

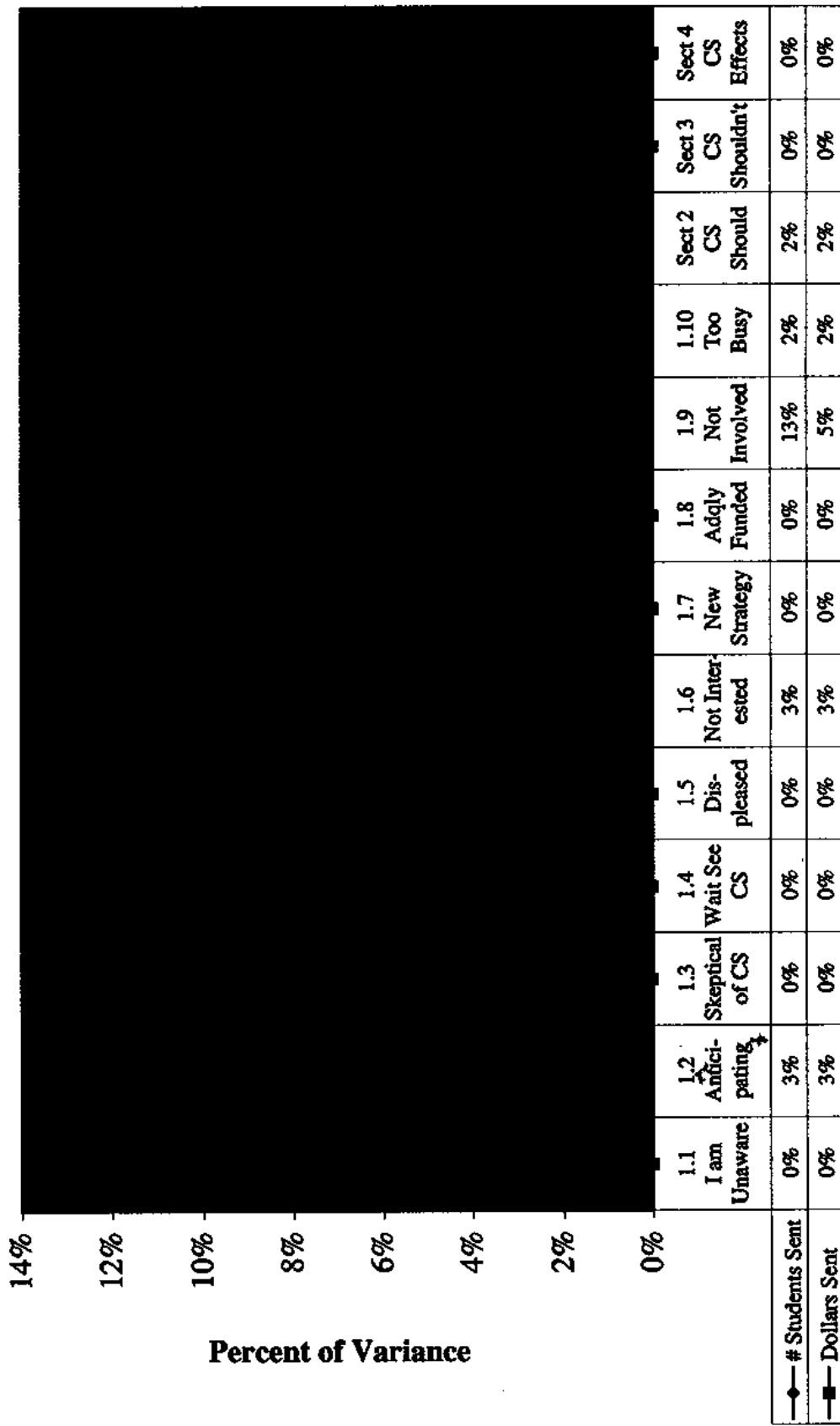
The amount of money budgeted for charter schools, Dollars Sent, was also significantly correlated at the $p = .05$ level with the following items from Section I: item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation," $r = .186$; item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools," $r = -.176$; and item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools," $r = -.233$. Money Sent was significantly correlated at the $p = .05$ level with item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools," $r = -.155$, and with Section II of the Superintendent Survey, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your district?" $r = .142$.

As the dollars sent to charter schools increased, districts were more likely to anticipate charter school implementation, and to be interested and involved in charter schools. These

respondents were not "too busy" to think about charter schools. They also "disagreed less" with items in Section II of the survey, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" There were no other "non-zero relationships" between dollars sent to charter schools and the Superintendents' Survey.

As can be seen in Figure 7, Students Sent to charter schools explained thirteen percent of the variance and Dollars Sent explained five percent of the variance in item 1.9, "I am not involved in charter schools." Both variables explained three percent of the variance in item 1.2, "I am anticipating charter school implementation" and item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools." Both variables explained two percent of the variance in item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools" and in Section II, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?"

Figure 7: Continuous Impact Variables



Dependent Variables

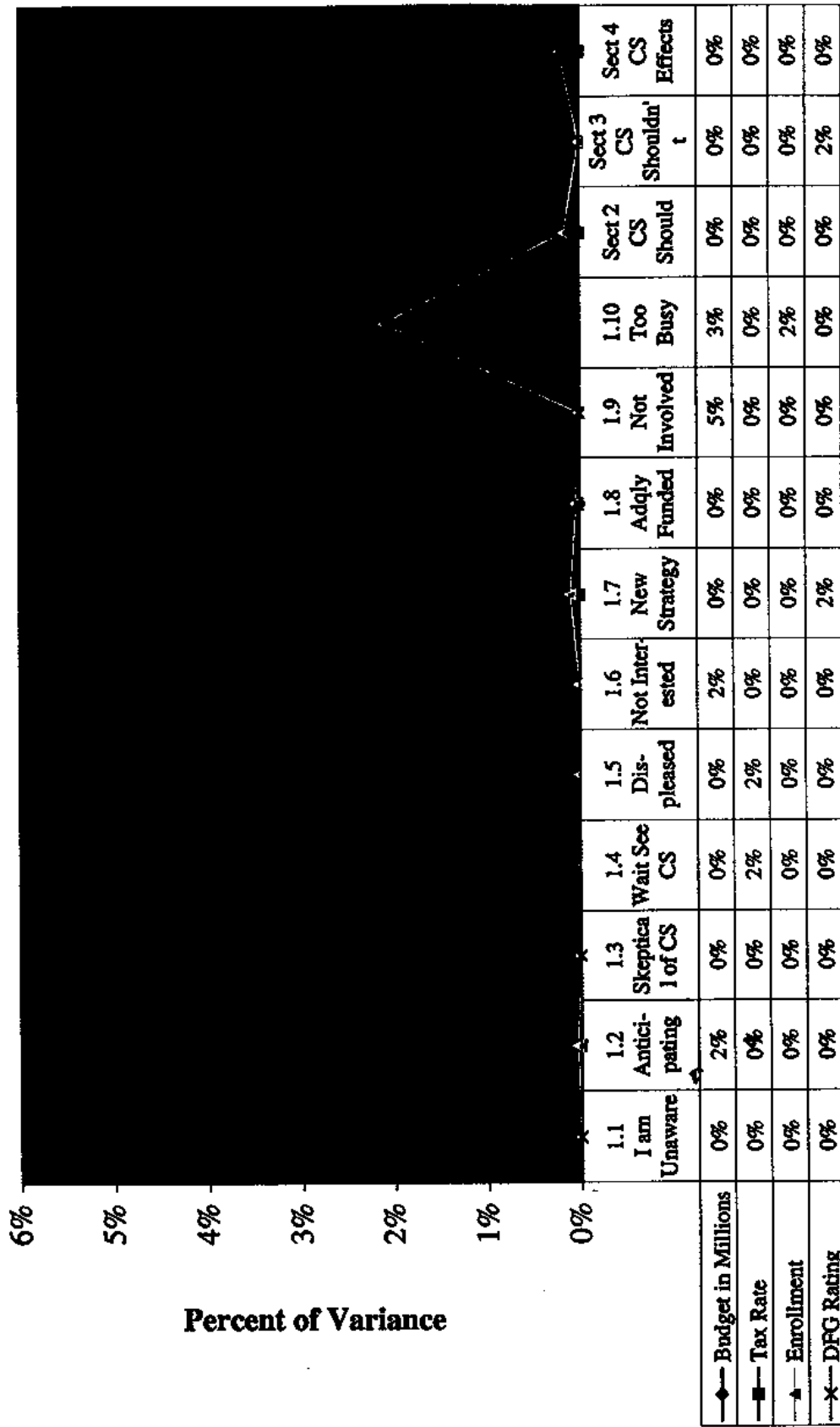
Summary of Research Question III: Significant Relationships

The third research question in this study was, "Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other descriptive variables?" Descriptive variables included ratings of self-knowledge by respondents, critical variables relating to the financial needs and resources of school districts, and variables related to the impact of charter schools on school districts.

Self-rated Knowledge of Charter Schools and Self-rated Knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 explained more than ten percent of the variance for item 1.1, "I am basically unaware of charter schools," and for item 1.10, "I am too busy to think about charter schools." As Self-rated Knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 increased, disagreement with Section IV, "What are the effects of charter school implementation in your school district?" increased.

None of the financial variables reported in this study explained more than five percent of the variance in perceptions of charter schools (See Figure 8). Budget in millions explained at least two percent of the variance of four items in Section I, "Personal Reactions to Charter Schools". School Tax Rate, Student Enrollment, and DFG Rating explained two percent of the variance in only one or two items from Section I, "Personal Reactions to Charter Schools". However, DFG rating also explained two percent of the variance in Section III of the survey, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school districts?" There were no significant relationships between District Type and perceptions of charter schools.

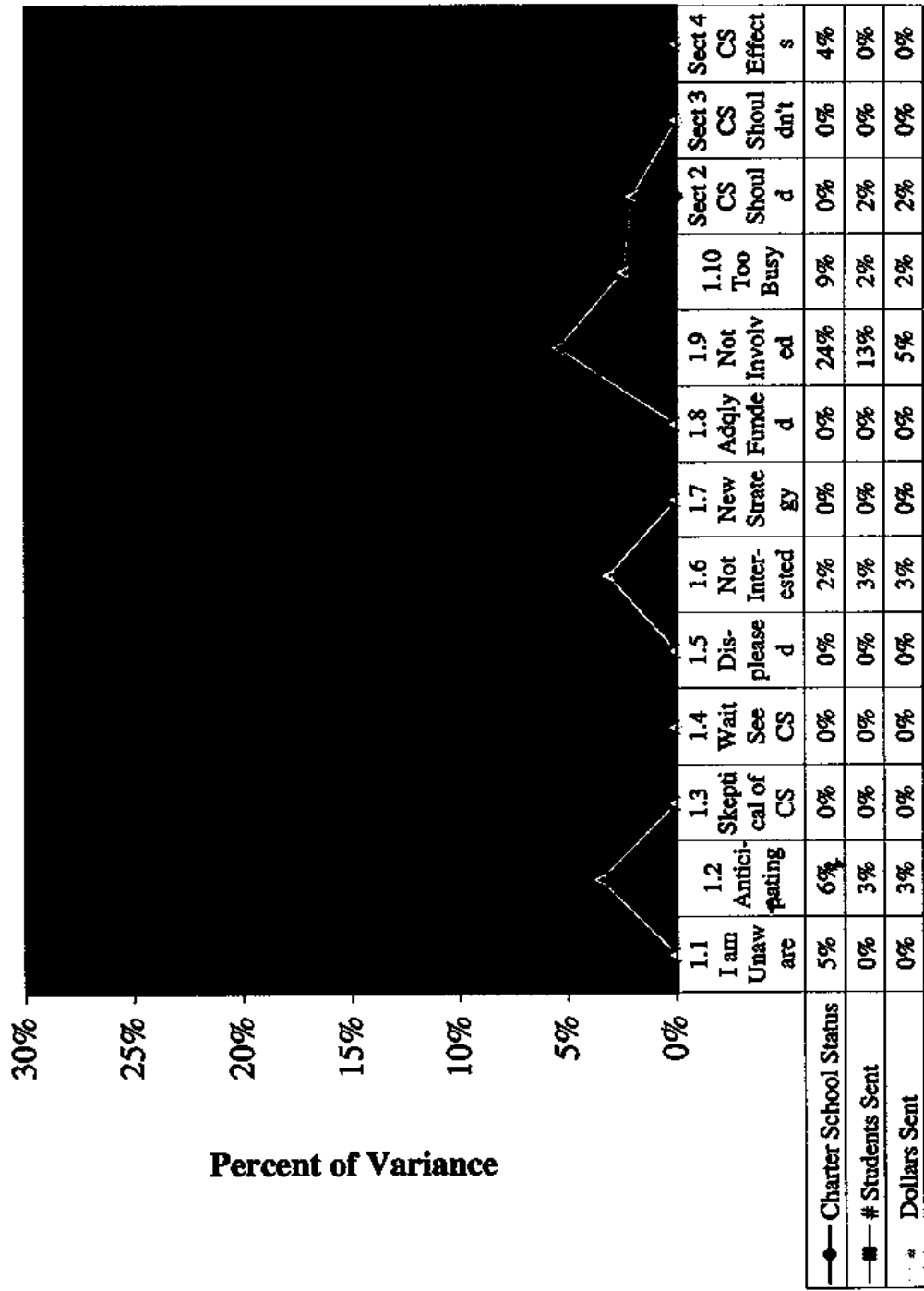
Figure 8: Financial Variables



Dependent Variables

Charter School Impact variables (Charter School Status, Students Sent, and Dollars Sent) are summarized in Figure 9. Charter School Status explained 24% of the variance and Students Sent explained 13% of the variance in item 1.9, "I am not involved with charter schools." These Impact variables also explained at least two percent of the variance for additional items in Section I, Personal Reactions, Section II, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" and Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools on your school district?"

Figure 9: Charter School Impact Variables



Dependent Variables

In the following chapter, the empirical results of this study are discussed and interpreted. Findings related to the respondents, the public school superintendents in the sample, are discussed first. Findings descriptive of the impact of charter schools on public school districts are then presented. Competing explanations are considered and comparisons with related research findings are discussed.

New Jersey District Superintendents

All public school superintendents in New Jersey must meet State certification requirements. This certification process includes a core of required coursework and experiences that provide a common framework regarding the role of public school education in the New Jersey. These stakeholders must be familiar with educational innovations, and knowledgeable about rules and regulations, funding issues and student needs. Therefore, it was expected that district superintendents in New Jersey would have personal and professional reactions to charter school implementation in New Jersey, whether or not these superintendents have experienced charter schools in their districts.

The high response rate to this anonymous survey supports the assumption that public school superintendents in New Jersey are taking the charter school experiment seriously. Two hundred thirty-four superintendents ($N = 234$) returned completed questionnaires, a 42.4 % return rate. It is perhaps interesting to note that the response rate in this study was almost identical to Ogden's response rate in Michigan. She surveyed all of the 524 public school superintendents in Michigan, and a total of 223 public school superintendent's, 42%, completed and returned questionnaires (Ogden, 1995). Although the similar response rate of New Jersey and Michigan public school superintendents may be coincidence, these common response rates

also support the assumption that district superintendents share common concerns regarding educational innovations such as charter schools.

Twenty-four percent of the respondents in this study considered themselves "very knowledgeable" about charter schools and 17% rated themselves "very knowledgeable" about the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. It should be noted that everyone, who described him or herself as "very knowledgeable," also had Charter School Presence. However, a majority of public school superintendents, without any Charter School Presence, rated themselves as knowledgeable about the issues. Fifty-nine percent of the sample said that they had "good knowledge" of Charter schools and 58% said they had "good knowledge" of New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995. Once again, these percentages were comparable to Ogden's findings (1995) in Michigan: 26% of the Michigan superintendent's rated themselves as "very knowledgeable" about charter schools, and 56% rated themselves as having "good knowledge."

Significant Perceptions of Respondents

Items in Section I of the Superintendent's Survey examined personal reaction to charter schools. Items that reflected positive attitudes toward charter schools were alternated with items reflecting a more negative attitude in order to minimize automatic response sets, that is, automatically agreeing, or disagreeing, with items in the survey. For this reason, agreement, or disagreement, with individual items may be attributed to survey respondents rather than to a response bias in the structure of the questionnaire.

Significant agreement, or disagreement, with the items in Section I, Personal Reactions, were identified in the first research question. These results showed that respondents were

simultaneously "aware" and "skeptical" about charter schools. They were not "too busy" to think about charter schools. As expected from New Jersey Department of Education projections for 1999-2000, a significant majority of subjects were not "anticipating charter school implementation in their school districts". These results were very similar to Ogden's findings with one exception. More of the district superintendents in Michigan, 43%, agreed that they were anticipating charter school implementation (Ogden, 1995).

The district superintendents who responded to this survey were not "pleased with the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools." They were not going to "wait until charter schools were adequately funded to take them seriously," and they were not "waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting." Although most subjects were not involved with charter schools, they were not "displeased with colleagues reactions to charter schools". Once again, these results were similar to Ogden's finding (1995) that superintendents personal reactions to charter schools was negative. Not only New Jersey superintendents, but also Michigan superintendents, had negative personal reactions to charter schools.

Significant Differences Between Respondents

Significant differences in personal reactions between subjects with Charter School Presence (N = 40) and subjects with No Charter School Presence (N = 193) were identified in the second research question. Most of these findings were considered self-evident. Subjects with charter school presence strongly disagreed that they were "unaware of charter schools", while those with no charter school presence, merely disagreed. Respondents with charter school presence were more likely to agree that they were "anticipating" charter school development. Subjects with charter school presence were also more interested in charter schools, and were

the planning stages, were well represented in this study. These districts have already allocated significant dollar amounts to send public school students to charter schools.

Significant perceptions regarding the impact of charter schools on school districts were evaluated in Section II, "Why should charter schools should be implemented in your school district?" Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" and Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school districts?" These findings are discussed in terms of the three research questions of this study, significant perceptions, significant differences, and significant relationships.

School Districts and Significant Perceptions

The first research question in this study was "What are the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding charter schools in New Jersey?" Specifically, do superintendents agree with reasons presented for implementing charter schools in their diverse school districts? Can superintendents from diverse school districts agree on reasons for not implementing charter schools, or on the perceived effects of charter school on their "unique" public school district?

The results of this study were quite interesting in this regard. On the one hand, survey districts "strongly disagreed" with reasons provided in Section II to justify the implementation of charter schools in their own school districts. However, these school districts also "disagreed" with the aggregate of reasons presented in Section III for non-implementation of charter schools, and with the effects of charter school implementation posed in Section IV.

Ogden reported similar results in her 1995 survey of Michigan superintendent's. Michigan superintendents also had a negative perception regarding reasons for implementing charter school in their school districts, reasons for not implementing charter schools in their

more involved. Respondents with charter school presence were not "too busy to think about charter schools." subjects without charter schools were more neutral when asked if "they were too busy to think about charter schools." All of these differences in personal reactions seem obvious given the definition of charter school presence, as having charter schools, or being in the planning stages for charter schools.

Of greater interest were some of the personal reactions where there were no significant differences related to Charter School Presence. Respondents with and without Charter School Presence were just as likely to be skeptical about charter schools and to be displeased with the "opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools." It may also be noted that Ogden found no significant differences in the personal reactions of superintendents based on charter school presence (Ogden, 1995).

These non-significant findings at first seem counterintuitive. It would have been easy to predict that superintendents with Charter School Presence might be more skeptical or displeased because they were experiencing the impact of charter schools. Alternately, those with Charter School Presence might be less skeptical or displeased, because they had more experience with the reality of "charter schools." However, neither of the plausible expectations is supported by the data. Perhaps the number of school districts with Charter School Presence is still too small to demonstrate a significant effect, or there has not been enough time and experience with Charter School Presence to change the well-established, negative perceptions of public school superintendents.

Respondents and Significant Relationships

Significant relationships between personal reactions as measured by Section I of the survey and the self-rated knowledge of respondents were identified in the third research question. Again, these findings appear self-evident given the specific nature of the items.

Both self-rated knowledge of charter schools, and self-rated knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995, were related to perceptions of charter schools. Knowledgeable subjects were more "aware," "anticipating" and "involved with charter schools" than less knowledgeable colleagues. They were not "waiting to see how charter schools turn out before forming an opinion," and they were not "too busy" to think about charter schools, and they were more "displeased with colleagues' reactions." Knowledgeable subjects also disagreed with Section II of the survey, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" Only subjects knowledgeable about the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995 tended to disagree with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school district?"

Although charter schools have been proposed as one of several methods to increase parental choice and promote educational reform in New Jersey public schools, the personal reactions of superintendents in this study and in the Ogden study are very similar. Ogden had shown that the personal reactions of superintendents toward charter schools may have been influenced negatively as their knowledge about charter schools and the charter school act in Michigan increased. Michigan superintendents who rated their knowledge of charter schools as good, or very good, were also more likely to have negative personal reactions to charter schools.

New Jersey superintendents and Michigan superintendents facing the charter school reform consistently report negative personal reactions to charter school implementation. Furthermore, actual experience with charter schools merely intensifies the negative personal reactions of public school superintendents.

Superintendents in the sample shared negative personal reactions to charter school implementation. Since superintendents interpret charter school mandates to boards of education, and share fiscal responsibility for implementation of charter schools, these negative personal reactions may constitute a significant barrier to charter school implementation in the New Jersey.

New Jersey Public School Districts

New Jersey has a relatively large number of public school districts with diverse characteristics. Some public school districts have one kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school, while other public school districts consist of multiple elementary, middle school and high schools. Some districts have enrollments less than four hundred students and other districts have at least 3500 students. The financial resources of districts also range from the very poorest, so called "Abbott Districts," with high concentrations of disadvantaged children, while other public school districts have budgets and other resources consistent with the highest socioeconomic levels in the country.

School districts in this study were similar to public school districts in New Jersey relative to District Type, DFG Rating, and Student Enrollment. Similarly, school districts in this sample were comparable to school districts in the state of New Jersey in terms of budget in millions and school tax rate. As expected, most of the school districts in the sample were not sending any students or dollars to charter schools. However, public school districts with charter schools, or in

school district as well as negative perceptions about the effects of charter schools on public school districts (Ogden, 1995).

How can these results be explained? It seems plausible that sample districts that strongly disagreed with Section II, reasons for implementing charter schools, would then agree with Section III, reasons why charter schools should not be implemented. How can district superintendents in both New Jersey and Michigan strongly disagree with the rationale in support of charter school implementation, yet disagree with reasons why charter schools should not be implemented in their school districts?

Perhaps responses to Section II, "Why should charter schools should be implemented in your school district?" Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" and, Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school districts?" may occur because charter schools are expected to negatively impact school districts differently. As Dye has noted, policy decisions, which solve a problem for one group in society, might very well create problems for other groups. Sample comments from respondents suggest three major areas of opposition to charter schools: issues related to funding, disparities in rules and regulations, and the implied competition for students.

As stated in the review of literature, opponents of charter schools were concerned about the funding implications of charter schools in New Jersey. The unedited comments offered by survey respondents can be found in Appendix F. District superintendents shared a number of similar concerns such as: "Charter schools should not be funded with local district dollars. Cost should be from state revenue." [050] "Charter schools present a significant fiscal problem for resident districts. Most public schools work well. Additional funds should be spent on public

schools." [080] "I strongly believe that charter schools do not create competition, but rather we compete for funding. There is little data demonstrating that charter schools are significantly better than public schools and it is unfair to give greatly needed funding away to profit seeking private individuals calling themselves charter schools. [114] "We should not legislate any program that we cannot adequately fund. Siphoning money from public schools to make the charter school program work is criminal! Public money should not be used to fund one dimensional programs that are popular." [177]

The New Jersey charter school legislation provided for the establishment of charter schools, supported by public funds, yet waived charter schools from many of the burdensome, bureaucratic rules and regulations traditional public schools are required to observe. Examples of superintendent concerns related to unfair rules and regulations are illustrated by the following comments. "The rules and regulations that govern charter schools should be the same as the ones for the regular public schools. " [383] "Charter schools should have the same conditions and requirements as regular public schools including facilities. The two charter schools I visited were inadequate and in poor condition." [328] "There is no accountability for charter schools. The DOE has very little involvement in determining the effectiveness of charter school performance." [342] "Charter schools function under different rules than do public schools. They have fewer mandates and less accountability." [066] "Generally, charter schools are a good idea. Unfortunately, New Jersey's way of implementing them is poor because of legislation and resulting [administrative] code. If you look to other states (Minn. or Ariz.) where they are very successful a lot can be learned." [096]

As stated in the review of literature, the New Jersey Department of Education has taken the position that charter schools will put pressure on districts to change, presumably in a positive direction, by introducing an element of competition. The district superintendents agree that charter schools establish a competition, but do not consider the outcome positive for students in public schools. Examples of concerns related to competition focus on the assumption that charter schools draw students with better resources, leaving higher concentrations of needier students in traditional public schools. Sample comments include the following. "We are quickly approaching an era when public schools will be for the 'have-nots' of society." [392] "Schools of choice and charter schools draw a select group and leave the masses in the public school. The state constitution says that all children must have a "T&E" education, not only those attending schools of choice." [143] "Charter schools 'feed' on good students in disadvantaged, urban districts." [147] "My primary concern is that special education classified children are underrepresented in charter schools." [154] "Our school district is currently in litigation with the local charter school because they refuse to racially balance their student enrollment to reflect the sending district." [395]

Only seven items in the entire Superintendent Survey had average responses greater ranging from neutral to agree. (For example, "Charter schools will benefit some students;" and "Charter schools will increase parental choice.") Similarly, only three of the unedited comments from the sample in this study expressed a positive view of charter school implementation in New Jersey. "I believe students in "failing" districts should have an option like charter schools." [163] "Charter schools are a fine option for parents and educators." [401] "Charter schools offer another opportunity for parents and students." [021]

School Districts and Significant Differences

Significant differences in personal reactions between school districts with Charter School Presence and school districts with No Charter School Presence were identified in the second research question. There were no significant differences related to Charter School Presence for Section II, "Why should charter schools should be implemented in your school district?" and for Section III, "Why shouldn't charter schools be implemented in your school district?" However, the forty school districts with Charter School Presence disagreed more strongly with Section IV, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school districts?" as compared with the superintendents who had no charter school involvement. School districts with Charter School Presence were more negative about the effects of charter schools than those without charter schools.

Sample comments from respondents with charter school experience help to illustrate the significance of this finding. "The charter school movement has not improved our district. Personally, I see some pros and cons to the concept of charter schools. Public schools are the great equalizer in our society. However, economics and demographics define the quality of our schools and communities." [165]. Another respondent with Charter School Presence stated, "Charter schools in our area have had a "rocky" couple of years. One recently closed causing much havoc for students, parents, and local schools. The idea may have some merit, I am not sure. Based on implementation thus far, though, the concept has not been proven. We need to see results, both at those schools and in home schools. Frankly, I am not impressed." [178] A respondent without charter school presence offered the following contrasting comment; "For

districts that have not been impacted, charter schools are not high on the priority list. Good luck!" [341].

It is very interesting to view these results in view of Ogden's 1995 findings in Michigan. Ogden found no significant differences in perceptions of charter schools between districts already operating or planning charter schools and districts without charter schools. She concluded that the lack of significant findings indicated that superintendents had negative perceptions about charter schools, irrespective of charter school status, because all superintendents in the State of Michigan could be faced with charter school implementation in the future (Ogden, 1995).

School Districts and Significant Relationships

The third research question in this study was, "Is there a meaningful relationship between superintendent perceptions as measured by the survey and other descriptive variables?" Some of the descriptive variables were associated with the impact of charter schools on the public school district, for example, Charter School Status, Number of Students Sent to Charter Schools, and Number of Dollars Sent to Charter Schools. Other variables of critical concern in New Jersey were related to the financial needs and resources of school districts: District Type, Student Enrollment, DFG Rating, Budget in Millions and School Tax Rate.

Charter School Impact

Three descriptive variables measured the impact of charter schools on school districts: Charter School Status, Number of Students Sent, and Dollars Sent to charter schools during 1999-2000. Districts with high charter school impact were already sending students and dollars to charter schools. Districts with less charter school impact were in the planning stages. As

expected, the results for charter school impact and Charter School Presence, the dichotomous independent variable in this study, were comparable because of the way that Charter School Presence was defined in this study.

By definition, the majority of districts who had no plans for charter schools, were more unaware, uninterested, uninvolved, and "too busy" to think about charter schools. Districts who already have charter schools, or are in the planning stages, were more likely to be "anticipating charter school implementation." Districts with charter school experiences also disagreed with Section IV of the survey, "What will be the effects of charter schools in your school districts?" Similarly, as the number of students and dollars sent to charter schools increased, school districts were more likely to be interested and involved in charter schools, or to anticipate charter school implementation. These districts were not "too busy" to think about charter schools, and they disagreed less with items in Section II of the survey, "Why should charter schools should be implemented in your school district?"

It is perhaps more interesting to note that districts with greater charter school involvement were more likely to disagree with Section IV of the survey, describing the effects of charter schools on the school district. Certainly, districts with charter school involvement were actually experiencing the effects of charter schools, while those without charter school involvement were merely imagining the effects of charter schools on their districts.

What were the specific areas of disagreement salient to school districts with charter school experience? Some of the items in Section IV described the alleged benefits of charter schools. Other items in Section IV described the presumably negative impact of charter schools on sending districts. School districts with charter school presence were more likely to disagree

with the following alleged benefits of charter schools described in Section IV: Charter schools will "increase parental involvement" and "parental choice." "Charter schools will increase teacher collegiality." Charter schools will "benefit some students;" and charter schools will provide "diverse ways of organizing or grouping students."

School districts with Charter School Presence were also more likely to disagree with the following items in Section IV describing the expected negative impact of charter schools on sending districts. For example, charter schools will decrease teacher "decision-making in instructional programming," as well as "the number of instructional strategies that teachers employ." Charter schools will decrease "teacher, administrator, and parent collaboration in decision-making," and "the curriculum will be less integrated." Irrespective of charter school status, a majority of districts rejected the notion that "charter schools will increase available funds to traditional schools."

Financial Needs and Resources

Descriptive variables that focused on the financial needs and resources of school districts in the sample included District Type, Student Enrollment, Budget in Millions, School Tax Rate, and DFG rating, an index of socioeconomic status. These variables represented a significant departure from the work of Ogden (1995) in Michigan, because these variables were selected specifically to investigate the differential impact of financial needs and resources on perceptions of charter schools.

As noted in the review of literature, New Jersey has been searching for equal educational funding since 1973 when the State Supreme Court ruled in Robinson v. Cahill that heavy reliance on local property tax discriminates against poor school districts. Charter schools have

been proposed as one of the educational remedies for poor school districts, providing educational choice to families who cannot afford private schools. However, charter schools in New Jersey also take monies away from existing school districts. Thus poor school districts with large student enrollments may experience greater charter school impact, with a corresponding decline in resources, while smaller school districts with limited financial resources, may be greatly affected by additional expenditures associated with the charter school implementation.

In view of this debate, it was interesting to note that District Type and School Tax Rate were not correlated with perceptions of charter schools. Student Enrollment was correlated with only one personal reaction to charter schools: respondents from districts with smaller enrollments were more likely to agree that they were "too busy to think about charter schools." Budget in millions was significantly correlated with "anticipating" charter school development and with "interest in charter schools." Budget in millions was also significantly correlated with "involvement in charter schools," and whether or not respondents were "too busy to think about charter schools."

Of perhaps greater interest, DFG Rating, an index of socioeconomic status, was negatively correlated with item 1.7, "I am pleased with the opportunity to try charter schools," and with Section III of the Superintendent Survey, "Why shouldn't charter school be implemented in your school district?" School districts with lower socioeconomic status were more likely to be pleased with the opportunity to try charter schools, but also were more likely to agree with reasons why charter schools should not be implemented. School districts with higher socioeconomic status were more displeased with the charter school innovation, but were more likely to disagree with reasons why charter school should not be implemented. There were no

significant relationships between DFG Ratings of socioeconomic status and other perceptions of Charter Schools measured by the survey.

It is interesting to note that superintendents from poor and needy districts were more eager to try charter schools than their counterparts with more resources. Perhaps wealthier districts are simply more satisfied with the status quo and, therefore, less eager to participate in the charter school experiment. Certainly, poorer school districts in New Jersey are under considerable pressure to meet the needs of their students for a thorough and efficient education. Unfortunately, however, the school districts with lower socioeconomic status also understand why charter school should not be implemented in their school districts. Dye has noted that policy decisions, which solve a problem for one group in society, might very well create problems for other groups. Dye explains that policy evaluation is learning about the consequences of public policy. He states that the impact of a policy is its effects on real-world conditions.

Since public school superintendents in New Jersey represent diverse district types with a wide range in student enrollment and financial resources, there is no consensus on reasons why charter schools should not be implemented. Thus, public school superintendents may oppose charter school implementation, but remain divided, and unable to cooperate, in presenting reasons for non-implementation of charter schools.

The lack of consensus about the probable impact of charter schools may benefit those who support the charter school initiative in New Jersey. The Commissioner of Education in New Jersey may be in a position to "divide and conquer" public superintendent opposition precisely because of the multiplicity and diversity of school districts in New Jersey. As stated in the review of literature, the debate about charter schools in New Jersey is about two things, educational

reform and money. From an educational perspective, charter schools provide an educational alternative to school districts with a high proportion of low-achieving, disadvantaged students. From a financial perspective, charter schools deplete the financial resources of public schools. The effects of charter school on student achievement and on the demographic distribution of students remains to be demonstrated.

Suggestions for Further Research

This research examined three questions dealing with the perceptions of public school superintendents toward charter schools. Charter schools are a relatively new approach in New Jersey and therefore need to be examined and analyzed from many perspectives. The results of this study suggest several areas for further research. In the future, researchers should consider evaluation of additional groups using the Ogden instrument, refinement of the Ogden survey, and other impact and accountability measures, in addition to perceptions of charter schools (Ogden, 1995).

Survey Refinement

Certainly the Ogden survey could be shortened, and retain face validity and reliability. Since many respondents gave consistently negative responses to all of the sections in the survey, a shorter survey could suffice as a measure of perception. Section II of the Superintendents Survey, "Why should charter schools be implemented in your school district?" is a relatively short and reliable way to identify negative perceptions of charter schools.

Researchers, who are interested in the relationship between and among sections in the survey, could eliminate ambiguous or less effective items. For example, the following items had negative item-total correlation with the total score for this survey. (Item 1.2, "I am anticipating

charter school implementation" item 1.3, "I am skeptical about charter schools," item 1.6, "I am not interested in charter schools," and item 3.3 "Charter schools should not be implemented because they are not a good idea for education.") These items could be improved by reverse coding.

Other items do not add useful information to the overall survey because the item-total correlation is near zero. (Item 1.5, "I am displeased with colleagues reactions to charter schools," item 3.1, "Charter schools should not be implemented because they are not adequately funded and item 3.4, "Charter schools should not be implemented because they are unfair to some types of students.") These changes may be sufficient to improve the internal consistency of Section I, "Personal Reactions to Charters Schools".

Additional Samples

It would be interesting to use Ogden's survey (1995) other important stakeholders in the charter school movement, such parents and teachers in traditional public schools. It would also be interesting to compare the perceptions of public school parents, teachers and administrators in the resident districts with the perceptions of charter school administrators, parents and teachers.

Additional Variables of Interest

Perceptions of charter schools are merely one variable of interest in the charter school controversy. In the future, it will be helpful to measure the effectiveness and financial viability of charter schools using the same school report cards measures that are required for New Jersey public schools. Empirical research that focuses on student achievement and performance in charter schools is needed to validate the claims of charter school proponents. Furthermore, as charter schools and other programs which draw students from existing public schools proliferate,

it will be important to evaluate the impact of these programs on the receiving public school districts, particularly with respect to student composition and special needs. Empirical research on the sending districts is also needed to demonstrate the actual effects of charter school implementation on the public schools.

Design Modifications

Last, but not least, in the opinion of this researcher, any quantitative study of the charter school movement would be enhanced by a qualitative component in the research design. This component could be useful in addressing several limitations in this study. Specifically, a follow-up interview would guarantee that the actual respondents were the district superintendents (rather than delegated staff) and would be invaluable in refining and interpreting survey results. Finally, the qualitative component might help identify additional samples, variables, and analyses of interest.

Conclusions

This research study replicated Ogden's 1995 investigation of superintendents' perceptions of charter schools. The instrument used to gather superintendent responses was a survey, with established face validity and reliability. The non-experimental survey research design used in this study cannot be used to make inferences about non-respondents. However, all New Jersey superintendents were invited to participate in this study, and the response rate was 42%.

Sample data was compared to public information describing New Jersey school districts whenever possible. School districts in this study were similar to public school districts in New Jersey relative to District type, Student Enrollment, and socioeconomic status. Similarly, school

districts in this sample were comparable to school districts in the state of New Jersey in terms of budget in millions and equalized tax rate. A small number of schools in the sample had extremely high budgets that inflated the sample mean and standard deviation.

The survey instrument was selected to permit comparisons to research studies by Ogden (1995). The reliability and face validity of the Charter School Survey used in this study were comparable to results reported in prior research. Items in Section I, "What are your personal reaction to charter schools?" were analyzed separately in order to understand the direction and meaning of subject responses.

As previously stated, this study was limited to only one of many significant stakeholders in the charter school movement: public school superintendents in state of New Jersey during the summer of 2000. It was assumed that the district superintendents actually completed the anonymous surveys used in this study, rather than delegating the task to other district staff. The data analysis was descriptive of respondents only, and could not be generalized to the hypothetical population of all public school superintendents in New Jersey. Similarly, correlational findings cannot imply causation: interpretation of results may be better explained by sampling and survey bias or other unknown and uncontrolled variables.

The results of this study showed that district superintendents considered themselves knowledgeable about charter schools and strongly opposed the charter school movement as it has been implemented in New Jersey. Superintendents who have experienced charter school implementation in their school districts had more negative perceptions than superintendents who have not yet been involved in charter school planning or implementation. The socioeconomic

status of school districts in New Jersey was significantly related to attitude toward charter school implementation and reasons why charter schools should not be implemented.

Given the many parallels between the findings in this study and the Ogden study, it was concluded that superintendents have negative perceptions of charter schools, as measured by this survey. A shorter survey might be just as effective in future studies involving other stakeholders and other variables of interest.

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Appendices

Appendix A

National Charter Schools Operating as of September 1997

National Charter Schools Operating As Of September 1997

State	1991 1992	1992 1993	1993 1994	1994 1995	1996 1997	No. of Schools Closed As of Sept. '97	No. of Schools Starting As of Sept. '97	Total Schools In Operation As of Sept. '97
Minnesota	2	5	7	3	3	(1)	7	26
California		28	37	30	21	(5)	19	130
Colorado		1	13	10	8	(1)	19	50
Michigan			2	41	33	(1)	29	104
New Mexico			4		1			5
Wisconsin			2	3	6		6	17
Arizona				47	58	(10)	45	140
Georgia				3	9		9	21
Hawaii				2				2
Massachusetts				15	7	(1)	3	24
Arkansas					2		13	15
Delaware					2		1	3
Dst of Columbia					2		1	3
Florida					5		28	33
Illinois					1		7	8
Louisiana					3		3	6
Texas					17		21	38
Connecticut							12	12
Kansas							1	1
New Jersey							13	13
North Carolina							34	34
Pennsylvania							6	6
Rhode Island							1	1
South Carolina							1	1
Yearly Total	2	34	65	154	178	(19)	279	-
Cum. Total	2	36	101	255	433	414	-	693

Source: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, A National Study of Charter Schools, Second-Year Report, July, 1998.

Appendix B

Title 18A Education Charter School Program Act of 1995

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**

TITLE 18A EDUCATION CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM ACT OF 1995**18A:36A-1. Short title**

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Charter School Program Act of 1995."

L.1995,c.426,s.1.

18A:36A-2. Findings, declarations relative to establishment of charter schools.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that the establishment of charter schools as part of this State's program of public education can assist in promoting comprehensive educational reform by providing a mechanism for the implementation of a variety of educational approaches which may not be available in the traditional public school classroom. Specifically, charter schools offer the potential to improve pupil learning; increase for students and parents the educational choices available when selecting the learning environment which they feel may be the most appropriate; encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods; establish a new form of accountability for schools; require the measurement of learning outcomes; make the school the unit for educational improvement; and establish new professional opportunities for teachers.

The Legislature further finds that the establishment of a charter school program is in the best interests of the students of this State and it is therefore the public policy of the State to encourage and facilitate the development of charter schools.

L.1995,c.426,s.2.

18A:36A-3. Charter school program established.

3. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a charter school program which shall provide for the approval and granting of charters to charter schools pursuant to the provisions of this act. A charter school shall be a public school operated under a charter granted by the commissioner, which is operated independently of a local board of education and is managed by a board of trustees. The board of trustees, upon receiving a charter from the commissioner, shall be deemed to be public agents authorized by the State Board of Education to supervise and control the charter school.

b. The program shall authorize the establishment of not more than 135 charter schools during the 48 months following the effective date of this act. A minimum of three charter schools shall be allocated to each county. The commissioner shall actively encourage the establishment of charter schools in urban school districts with the participation of institutions of higher education.

L.1995,c.426,s.3.

4. a. A charter school may be established by teaching staff members, parents with children attending the schools of the district, or a combination of teaching staff members and parents. A charter school may also be established by an institution of higher education or a private entity located within the State in conjunction with teaching staff members and parents of children attending the schools of the district. If the charter school is established by a private entity, representatives of the private entity shall not constitute a majority of the trustees of the school, and the charter shall specify the extent to which the private entity shall be involved in the operation of the school. The name of the charter school shall not include the name or identification of the private entity, and the private entity shall not realize a net profit from its operation of a charter school. A

private or parochial school shall not be eligible for charter school status.

b. A currently existing public school is eligible to become a charter school if the following criteria are met:

(1) At least 51% of the teaching staff in the school shall have signed a petition in support of the school becoming a charter school; and

(2) At least 51% of the parents or guardians of pupils attending that public school shall have signed a petition in support of the school becoming a charter school.

c. An application to establish a charter school shall be submitted to the commissioner and the local board of education or State superintendent, in the case of a State-operated school district, in the school year preceding the school year in which the charter school will be established. The board of education or State superintendent shall review the application and forward a recommendation to the commissioner within 60 days of receipt of the application. The commissioner shall have final authority to grant or reject a charter application.

d. The local board of education or a charter school applicant may appeal the decision of the commissioner to the State Board of Education. The State board shall render a decision within 30 days of the date of the receipt of the appeal. If the State board does not render a decision within 30 days, the decision of the commissioner shall be deemed final.

e. A charter school established during the 48 months following the effective date of this act, other than a currently existing public school which becomes a charter school pursuant to the provisions of subsection b. of section 4 of this act, shall not have an enrollment in excess of 500 students or greater than 25% of the student body of the school district in which the charter school is established, whichever is less.

Any two charter schools within the same public school district that are not operating the same grade levels may petition the commissioner to amend their charters and consolidate into one school. The commissioner may approve an amendment to consolidate, provided that the basis

for consolidation is to accommodate the transfer of students who would otherwise be subject to the random selection process pursuant to section 8 of P.L.1995, c.426 (C.18A:36A-8).

L.1995,c.426,s.4; amended 2000,c.142,s.1.

5. The application for a charter school shall include the following information:

- a. The identification of the charter applicant;
- b. The name of the proposed charter school;
- c. The proposed governance structure of the charter school including a list of the proposed members of the board of trustees of the charter school or a description of the qualifications and method for the appointment or election of members of the board of trustees;
- d. The educational goals of the charter school, the curriculum to be offered, and the methods of assessing whether students are meeting educational goals. Charter school students shall be required to meet the same testing and academic performance standards as established by law and regulation for public school students. Charter school students shall also meet any additional assessment indicators which are included within the charter approved by the commissioner;
- e. The admission policy and criteria for evaluating the admission of students which shall comply with the requirements of section 8 of this act;
- f. The age or grade range of students to be enrolled;
- g. The school calendar and school day schedule;
- h. A description of the charter school staff responsibilities and the proposed qualifications of teaching staff;
- i. A description of the procedures to be implemented to ensure significant parental involvement in the operation of the school;
- j. A description of, and address for, the physical facility in which the charter school will be located;
- k. Information on the manner in which community groups will be involved in the charter school planning process;
- l. The financial plan for the charter school and the provisions which will be made for auditing the school pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.18A:23-1;

m. A description of and justification for any waivers of regulations which the charter school will request; and

n. Such other information as the commissioner may require.

L.1995,c.426,s.5.

18A:36A-6. Powers of charter school

6. A charter school established pursuant to the provisions of this act shall be a body corporate and politic with all powers necessary or desirable for carrying out its charter program, including, but not limited to, the power to:

a. Adopt a name and corporate seal; however, any name selected shall include the words "charter school;"

b. Sue and be sued, but only to the same extent and upon the same conditions that a public entity can be sued;

c. Acquire real property from public or private sources, by purchase, lease, lease with an option to purchase, or by gift, for use as a school facility;

d. Receive and disburse funds for school purposes;

e. Make contracts and leases for the procurement of services, equipment and supplies;

f. Incur temporary debts in anticipation of the receipt of funds;

g. Solicit and accept any gifts or grants for school purposes; and

h. Have such other powers as are necessary to fulfill its charter and which are not inconsistent with this act or the requirements of the commissioner.

The board of trustees of a charter school shall comply with the provisions of the "Open Public Meetings Act," P.L.1975, c.231 (C.10:4-6 et seq.).

L.1995,c.426,s.6.

7. A charter school shall be open to all students on a space available basis and shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district; however, a charter

school may limit admission to a particular grade level or to areas of concentration of the school, such as mathematics, science, or the arts. A charter school may establish reasonable criteria to evaluate prospective students which shall be outlined in the school's charter.

L.1995,c.426,s.7.

8. a. Preference for enrollment in a charter school shall be given to students who reside in the school district in which the charter school is located. If there are more applications to enroll in the charter school than there are spaces available, the charter school shall select students to attend using a random selection process. A charter school shall not charge tuition to students who reside in the district.

b. A charter school shall allow any student who was enrolled in the school in the immediately preceding school year to enroll in the charter school in the appropriate grade unless the appropriate grade is not offered at the charter school.

c. A charter school may give enrollment priority to a sibling of a student enrolled in the charter school.

d. If available space permits, a charter school may enroll non-resident students. The terms and condition of the enrollment shall be outlined in the school's charter and approved by the commissioner.

e. The admission policy of the charter school shall, to the maximum extent practicable, seek the enrollment of a cross section of the community's school age population including racial and academic factors.

L.1995,c.426,s.8.

9. A student may withdraw from a charter school at any time. A student may be expelled from a charter school based on criteria determined by the board of trustees, which are consistent with the provisions of N.J.S.18A:37-2, and approved by the commissioner as part of the school's charter. Any expulsion shall be made upon the recommendation of the charter school principal, in consultation with the student's teachers.

L.1995,c.426,s.9.

10. A charter school may be located in part of an existing public school building, in space provided on a public work site, in a public building, or any other suitable location. The facility shall be exempt from public school facility regulations except those pertaining to the health or safety of the pupils. A charter school shall not construct a facility with public funds.

L.1995,c.426,s.10.

11. a. A charter school shall operate in accordance with its charter and the provisions of law and regulation which govern other public schools; except that, upon the request of the board of trustees of a charter school, the commissioner may exempt the school from State regulations concerning public schools, except those pertaining to assessment, testing, civil rights and student health and safety, if the board of trustees satisfactorily demonstrates to the commissioner that the exemption will advance the educational goals and objectives of the school.

b. A charter school shall comply with the provisions of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes concerning the provision of services to handicapped students; except that the fiscal responsibility for any student currently enrolled in or determined to require a private day or residential school shall remain with the district of residence.

c. A charter school shall comply with applicable State and federal anti-discrimination statutes.

L.1995,c.426,s.11.

18A:36A-12 Definitions; per pupil payments to charter school.

12. a. As used in this section:

"Maximum T&E amount" means the T&E amount plus the T&E flexible amount for the budget year weighted for kindergarten, elementary, middle school and high school respectively as set forth in section 12 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-12);

"Program budget" means the sum in the prebudget year inflated by the CPI rate published most recent to the budget calculation of core curriculum standards aid; supplemental core curriculum standards aid; stabilization aid, including supplemental stabilization aid and supplemental school tax reduction aid; designated general fund balance; miscellaneous local general fund revenue; and the district's general fund tax levy.

b. The school district of residence shall pay directly to the charter school for each student enrolled in the charter school who resides in the district an amount equal to the lower of either 90% of the program budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the district or 90% of the maximum T&E amount. The per pupil amount paid to the charter school shall not exceed the program budget per pupil for the specific grade level in the district in which the charter school is located. The district of residence shall also pay directly to the charter school any categorical aid attributable to the student, provided the student is receiving appropriate categorical services, and any federal funds attributable to the student.

c. For any student enrolled in a charter school in which 90% of the program budget per pupil for the specific grade level is greater than 90% of the maximum T&E amount, the State shall pay the difference between the two amounts.

d. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection b. of this section, in the case of a student who was not included in the district's projected resident enrollment for the school year, the State shall pay 100% of the amount required pursuant to subsection b. of this section for the first year of the student's enrollment in the charter school.

e. The State shall make payments required pursuant to subsections c. and d. of this section directly to the charter school.

L.1995,c.426,s.12; amended 2000,c.142,s.2.

13. The students who reside in the school district in which the charter school is located shall be provided transportation to the charter school on the same terms and conditions as transportation is provided to students attending the schools of the district. Non-resident students shall receive transportation services pursuant to regulations established by the State board.

L.1995,c.426,s.13.

14. a. The board of trustees of a charter school shall have the authority to decide matters related to the operations of the school including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures, subject to the school's charter. The board shall provide for appropriate insurance against any loss or damage to its property or any liability resulting from the use of its property or from the acts or omissions of its officers and employees.

b. In the case of a currently existing public school which becomes a charter school pursuant to the provisions of subsection b. of section 4 of this act, all school employees of the charter school shall be deemed to be members of the bargaining unit defined in the applicable agreement and shall be represented by the same majority representative organization as the employees covered by that agreement. In the case of other charter schools, the board of trustees of a charter school shall have the authority to employ, discharge and contract with necessary teachers and nonlicensed employees subject to the school's charter. The board of trustees may choose whether or not to offer the terms of any collective bargaining agreement already established by the school district for its employees, but the board shall adopt any health and safety provisions of the agreement. The charter school and its employees shall be subject to the provisions of the "New Jersey Employer-Employee Relations Act," P.L.1941, c.100 (C.34:13A-1 et seq.). A charter school shall not set a teacher salary lower than the minimum teacher salary specified pursuant to section 7 of P.L.1985, c.321 (C.18A:29-5.6) nor higher than the highest step in the salary guide in the collective bargaining agreement which is in effect in the district in which the charter school is located.

c. All classroom teachers and professional support staff shall hold appropriate New Jersey certification. The commissioner shall make appropriate adjustments in the alternate route program in order to expedite the certification of persons who are qualified by education and experience.

d. A public school employee, tenured or non-tenured, may request a leave of absence of up to three years from the local board of education or State district superintendent in order to work in a charter school. Approval for a leave of absence shall not be unreasonably withheld. Employees on a leave of absence as provided herein shall remain in, and continue to make contributions to, their retirement plan during the time of the leave and shall be enrolled in the health benefits plan of the district in which the charter school is located. The charter school shall make any required employer's contribution to the district's health benefits plan.

e. Public school employees on a leave shall not accrue tenure in the public school system but shall retain tenure, if so applicable, and shall continue to accrue seniority, if so applicable, in the public school system if they return to their non-charter school when the leave ends. An employee of a charter school shall not accrue tenure pursuant to N.J.S.18A:17-2, N.J.S.18A:17-3, or N.J.S.18A:28-5, but shall acquire streamline tenure pursuant to guidelines promulgated by the commissioner, and the charter shall specify the security and protection to be afforded to the employee in accordance with the guidelines.

f. Any public school employee who leaves or is dismissed from employment at a charter school within three years shall have the right to return to the employee's former position in the public school district which granted the leave of absence, provided the employee is otherwise eligible for employment in the public school.

L.1995,c.426,s.14.

15. Any individual or group may bring a complaint to the board of trustees of a charter school alleging a violation of the provisions of this act. If, after presenting the complaint to the board of trustees, the individual or group determines that the board of trustees has not adequately addressed the complaint, they may present that complaint to the commissioner who shall investigate and respond to the complaint. The board shall establish an advisory grievance committee consisting of both parents and teachers who are selected by the parents and teachers of the school to make nonbinding recommendations to the board concerning the disposition of a complaint.

L.1995,c.426,s.15.

16. a. The commissioner shall annually assess whether each charter school is meeting the goals of its charter, and shall conduct a comprehensive review prior to granting a renewal of the charter. The county superintendent of schools of the county in which the charter school is located shall have on-going access to the records and facilities of the charter school to ensure that the charter school is in compliance with its charter and that State board regulations concerning assessment, testing, civil rights, and student health and safety are being met.

b. In order to facilitate the commissioner's review, each charter school shall submit an annual report to the local board of education, the county superintendent of schools, and the commissioner in the form prescribed by the commissioner. The report shall be received annually by the local board, the county superintendent, and the commissioner no later than August 1. The report shall also be made available to the parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the charter school.

c. By April 1, 2001, the commissioner shall hold public hearings in the north, central, and southern regions of the State to receive input from members of the educational community and the public on the charter school program.

d. The commissioner shall commission an independent study of the charter school program. The study shall be conducted by an individual or entity identified with expertise in the field of education and the selection shall be approved by the Joint Committee on the Public Schools. The individual or entity shall design a comprehensive study of the charter school program.

e. The commissioner shall submit to the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Board of Education by October 1, 2001 an evaluation of the charter school program based upon the public input required pursuant to subsection c. of this section and the independent study required pursuant to subsection d. of this section. The evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, consideration of the following elements:

(1) the impact of the charter school program on resident districts' students, staff, parents, educational programs, and finances;

(2) the impact of the charter school program and the increased number of schools on the economics of educational services on a Statewide basis;

(3) the fairness and the impact of the reduction of available resources on the ability of resident districts to promote competitive educational offerings;

(4) the impact of the shift of pupils from nonpublic schools to charter schools;

(5) the comparative demographics of student enrollments in school districts of residence and the charter schools located within those districts. The comparison shall include, but not be limited to, race, gender, socioeconomic status, enrollment of special education students,

enrollment of students of limited English proficiency, and student progress toward meeting the core curriculum content standards as measured by student results on Statewide assessment tests;

(6) the degree of involvement of private entities in the operation and financial support of charter schools, and their participation as members of charter school boards of trustees;

(7) verification of the compliance of charter schools with applicable laws and regulations;

(8) student progress toward meeting the goals of the charter schools;

(9) parent, community and student satisfaction with charter schools;

(10) the extent to which waiting lists exist for admission to charter schools and the length of those lists;

(11) the extent of any attrition among student and faculty members in charter schools; and

(12) the results of the independent study required pursuant to subsection d. of this section.

The evaluation shall include a recommendation on the advisability of the continuation, modification, expansion, or termination of the program. If the evaluation does not recommend termination, then it shall include recommendations for changes in the structure of the program which the commissioner deems advisable. The commissioner may not implement any recommended expansion, modification, or termination of the program until the Legislature acts on that recommendation.

L.1995,c.426,s.16; amended 2000,c.142,s.3.

17. A charter granted by the commissioner pursuant to the provisions of this act shall be granted for a four-year period and may be renewed for a five-year period. The commissioner may revoke a school's charter if the school has not fulfilled any condition imposed by the commissioner in connection with the granting of the charter or if the school has violated any provision of its charter. The commissioner may place the charter school on probationary status to allow the implementation of a remedial plan after which, if the plan is unsuccessful, the charter may be summarily revoked. The commissioner shall develop procedures and guidelines for the revocation and renewal of a school's charter.

L.1995,c.426,s.17.

18A:36A-13. Transportation for students

18. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the provisions of this act.

L.1995,c.426,s.18.

Appendix C

Summary of Public Comments Before State Board of Education

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS
BEFORE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Public Comments	Department of Education Responses
1 The per-pupil formula is extremely unjust and penalizes pupils attending the regular public school. There is a loss of tax revenue when a non-public student attends a charter school. The loss of small group of students cannot be offset in equal dollars with a reduction in staff.	DOE Disagrees. All students in NJ are entitled to a free education provided by the district in which they reside. This entitlement can be accomplished whether they choose to attend a public school of the district or a charter school. The State funding formula is based on a per pupil method. The incremental costs of students entering or leaving the school district generally balance out.
2 The constitutional obligations to students attending charter school's in Abbott districts must be addressed. The level of funding behind each student in the charter school must be equal to the "I" and "J" average, and the payment of funding to the charter school must not diminish the per-pupil funding made available to the students in the other public schools in the district.	DOE Disagrees. Charter schools offers a choice. It's voluntary. If parents want their children to receive an education at a higher per pupil amount they can keep their children in the public schools of the district. Per pupil funding in Abbott districts is founded on a long-standing of inefficiency and educational failure in those districts. Charter school's, new entities we believe can accomplish their goals on the funding levels set forth in the code.
3 A charter school should receive 90% of the maximum T&E amount or the program budget, whichever is higher, as the local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level. As an alternative, a charter school should receive 100% of the maximum T&E amount. The local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level should be based upon actual expenditures of the districts in which the charter school students reside. This change is necessary to encourage and facilitate the growth of charter schools.	DOE Disagrees. The term "local levy per pupil" was defined by the DOE to mean the lower of the maximum T&E amount or the program budget. Capping local levy at the maximum T&E amount means that the cost would be no higher than the cost per elementary pupil of delivering programs and services that enable all students to achieve the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards which constitute a thorough regular education.
4 If a charter school requests funding above the 90% level, the district board(s) of education or superintendent(s) of the State-operated school district(s) should also be notified.	DOE Disagrees. The code provides for the charter school to petition the Commissioner in its NJCS Application for a charter school rate greater than the 90% presumptive amount or the rate as previously approved by the Commissioner. The charter school making the request is responsible for all notifications.
5 If a charter school operates with a region of residence, could the Commissioner order one district to send 90% of its funding to the charter school and order another district to send 95% of its funding?	The proposed rules do not preclude the Commissioner from granting such a request. The Commissioner would be compelled to state a reason.
6 The proposed rules state that in the first year, districts will be charged in proportion to the total number of students in the district regardless of actual final enrollment. The rules do not make clear how the budget computations will be done in the case of a region of residence. A region of residence district would be forced to budget without knowing how much the CS would cost.	This subsection was written in order to establish an <u>average</u> local levy per pupil for purposes of a cap on per pupil only. Districts would receive estimated appropriations for budgeting purposes. The cap on the per pupil amount for the CS with a region of residence would remain the same until the subsequent year.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS
BEFORE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Public Comments	Department of Education Responses	
7	<p>It is not fair to limit the CS funding to 90% of the lower of the maximum T&E amount per grade level or the program budget per grade level. The actual cost per pupil amount should be used. For example, Upper Township School District pays the Ocean City School District a tuition rate for high school students far in excess of the per pupil amount calculated for a charter school.</p>	<p>DOE Disagrees. The rationale for using the maximum T&E amount – see #3. NJ does not require school districts to maintain budget and accounting data by grade level – thus, allocations methods are used to distribute the cost by grade levels. The CS program budget per pupil is based on an allocation of costs of the sending districts. CS act requires a calculation based on the local levy budget per pupil, which is a revenue –based definition – includes the local tax levy and State aid of a school district's regular education program for T&E as opposed to actual cost per pupil which is an expenditure-based definition supported by revenue sources other than the local levy budget revenues.</p>
8	<p>Non-public school children attending CS will not be funded for the first year of the program due to rules require resident district to pay costs without assistance from the State.</p>	<p>DOE Agrees. Only for the first year of implementation of charter. Adjustments in subsequent years shall be made by the State in the form of aid payments.</p>
9	<p>The June 15th deadline for a district to identify students eligible for categorical aid is unreasonable, especially for kindergarten students.</p>	<p>DOE Response. Rules require student to enroll first in the resident district. Also, eligibility for categorical aid is an on going process.</p>
10	<p>Charter school pupils will be receiving 100% of the \$40.00 aid per pupil for Distance Learning Network Aid, while pupils remaining in the district public schools will be receiving less than \$40.00 per pupil.</p>	<p>DOE Response. Only for the first year of implementation of charter schools (1997-98). However, in 1998-99 school year State aid amounts shall be based on budget year per pupil counts.</p>
11	<p>Allowing a school district to petition for a reduction of local levy budget per pupil for the specific grade level punishes a charter school for efficient functioning. It also diminishes the independence of a charter school when a school district can indirectly dictate the spending policies of the charter school.</p>	<p>DOE Response. The concept of charter schools is that they will be innovative and efficient. Efficiency is not promoted by permitting the accumulation of large surpluses through funding levels established in excess of actual spending needs. Also, taxpayers should not have to turn over funds that are not necessary for the operation of the charter school.</p>
12	<p>The charter school rules should require an economic/financial impact study similar to the one required for withdrawing from regional school districts. If it found that a CS would have a negative financial impact on the district, the application should be rejected.</p>	<p>DOE Disagrees. The establishment of a charter school is provided for in N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-1 et seq. with no requirements for an economic/financial impact study.</p>

Source: New Jersey Department of Education, State Board of Education, May 21, 1997

Appendix D

Original Thirteen New Jersey Charter Schools

ORIGINAL THIRTEEN NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS

	County	Charter School and District of Residence
1.	Atlantic	<p align="center">Galloway Kindergarten Charter School</p> <p>Grade: Kindergarten 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten 1997-98 Enrollment: 200 <i>District of Residence: Galloway Township</i></p>
2.	Camden	<p align="center">Leap Academy Charter School</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 8 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten to 5 1997-98 Enrollment: 324 <i>District of Residence: Camden City</i></p>
3.	Essex	<p align="center">North Star Academy Charter School of Newark</p> <p>Grades: 5 to 8 1997-98 Focus: Grades 5 and 6 1997-98 Enrollment: 72 <i>District of Residence: Newark</i></p>
4.	Essex	<p align="center">Robert Treat Academy Charter School, Inc.</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 4 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten to 1 1997-98 Enrollment: 100 <i>District of Residence: Newark</i></p>
5.	Hudson	<p align="center">Elysian Charter School</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 5 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten to 2 1997-98 Enrollment: 90 <i>District of Residence: Hoboken</i></p>
6.	Hudson	<p align="center">Gateway Charter School</p> <p>Grades: 6 to 8 1997-98 Focus: Grade 6 1997-98 Enrollment: 30 <i>District of Residence: Jersey City</i></p>
7.	Hudson	<p align="center">Soaring Heights Charter School</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 4 and Special Education 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten to 4 and Spec. Ed. 1997-98 Enrollment: 86 <i>District of Residence: Jersey City</i></p>

ORIGINAL THIRTEEN NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS

County	Charter School and District of Residence	
8.	Hudson	<p align="center">The Learning Community Charter School</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 6 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten to 2 1997-98 Enrollment: 98</p> <p align="center"><i>District of Residence: Jersey City</i></p>
9.	Hudson	<p align="center">Jersey City Community Charter School</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 6 and 9 to 12 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten to 2 and Grades 9 to 12 1997-98 Enrollment: 120</p> <p align="center"><i>District of Residence: Jersey City</i></p>
10.	Mercer	<p align="center">Princeton Charter School</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 8 1997-98 Focus: Grades 4 to 6 1997-98 Enrollment: 72</p> <p align="center"><i>District of Residence: Princeton Regional</i></p>
11.	Mercer	<p align="center">Samuel DeWitt Proctor Academy Charter School</p> <p>Grades: 7 to 12 1997-98 Focus: Grades 7 and 8 1997-98 Enrollment: 48</p> <p align="center"><i>District of Residence: Ewing Township and Trenton</i></p>
12.	Mercer	<p align="center">Trenton Community Charter School</p> <p>Grades: Kindergarten to 6 1997-98 Focus: Kindergarten to 3 1997-98 Enrollment: 150</p> <p align="center"><i>District of Residence: Trenton</i></p>
13.	Sussex	<p align="center">Sussex County Charter School for Technology</p> <p>Grades: 7 and 8 1997-98 Focus: Grades 7 and 8 1997-98 Enrollment: 50</p> <p align="center"><i>District of Residence: Sparta</i></p>

Source: New Jersey Department of Education

Appendix E
Survey Instrument

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SURVEY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Directions: Please rate the extent of your agreement with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate corresponding number at the right of each statement.

SECTION 1: WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL REACTION TO CHARTER SCHOOLS?

1.1 I am basically unaware of charter schools.	1	2	3	4	5
1.2 I am anticipating charter school implementation.	1	2	3	4	5
1.3 I am skeptical about charter schools.	1	2	3	4	5
1.4 I am waiting to see how charter schools perform before reacting.	1	2	3	4	5
1.5 I am displeased with colleagues' reactions to charter schools.	1	2	3	4	5
1.6 I am not interested in charter schools.	1	2	3	4	5
1.7 I am pleased to have the opportunity to try new academic strategies like charter schools.	1	2	3	4	5
1.8 I am going to take charter schools seriously when they are adequately funded.	1	2	3	4	5
1.9 I am not involved in charter schools.	1	2	3	4	5
1.10 I am too busy to think about charter schools.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 2: WHY SHOULD CHARTER SCHOOLS BE IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT?

2.1 Charter schools should be implemented because it is time for fundamental change in education.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 Charter schools should be implemented because the business community is demanding change in education.	1	2	3	4	5
2.3 Charter schools should be implemented because parents are demanding change in education.	1	2	3	4	5
2.4 Charter schools should be implemented because they are an educational idea that makes sense.	1	2	3	4	5
2.5 Charter schools should be implemented because the current system is not working for many kids.	1	2	3	4	5
2.6 Charter schools should be implemented because they don't require much additional funding.	1	2	3	4	5
2.7 Charter schools should be implemented because educators are dedicated to doing what is best for kids.	1	2	3	4	5
2.8 Charter schools should be implemented because innovative programs are not available in traditional schools.	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Directions: Please rate the extent of your agreement with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate corresponding number at the right of each statement.

SECTION 3: WHY SHOULDN'T CHARTER SCHOOLS BE IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT?

3.1	Charter schools should not be implemented because they are not adequately funded.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Charter schools should not be implemented because they are of no interest to educational groups such as the NEA, NJEA, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	Charter schools should not be implemented because they are not a good idea for education.	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	Charter schools should not be implemented because they are unfair to some types of students.	1	2	3	4	5
3.5	Charter schools should not be implemented because they focus too much on needs of the business community.	1	2	3	4	5
3.6	Charter schools should not be implemented because they create too much change for school communities too fast.	1	2	3	4	5
3.7	Charter schools should not be implemented because colleges and universities may object to them as a public school alternative.	1	2	3	4	5
3.8	Charter schools should not be implemented because they may cause difficulties for students transferring to other schools.	1	2	3	4	5
3.9	Charter schools should not be implemented because they are a fad.	1	2	3	4	5
3.10	Charter schools should not be implemented because gifted and talented students may leave the traditional system.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 4: WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECTS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT?

4.1	The effect of charter schools will be increased parental involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
4.2	The effect of charter schools will be greater parental choice of academic environments for their children.	1	2	3	4	5
4.3	The effect of charter schools will be to decrease teacher decision-making in instructional programming in all schools.	1	2	3	4	5
4.4	The effect of charter schools will be to cause teachers to decrease the number of instructional strategies they employ.	1	2	3	4	5
4.5	The effect of charter schools will be decreased teacher, parent, and administrator collaboration in decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5
4.6	The effect of charter schools will be increased teacher collegiality.	1	2	3	4	5
4.7	The effect of charter schools will be less curriculum integration.	1	2	3	4	5
4.8	The effect of charter schools will benefit some students.	1	2	3	4	5
4.9	The effect of charter schools will be diverse ways of organizing or grouping students for learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4.10	The effect of charter schools will be to decrease business community involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
4.11	The effect of charter schools will be to increase available funds for traditional schools.	1	2	3	4	5

PART II: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. How would you rate your knowledge of charter schools?
 Very Good Good Not Sure Poor Very Poor
2. How would you rate your knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995?
 Very Good Good Not Sure Poor Very Poor
3. Your school district operating type: K-6 K-8 K-12
4. Your school district enrollment range: Less than 400 400 - 750
 Less than 1,800 1,800 - 3,500 Over 3,500
5. What is your District Factor Group (DFG): _____.
6. Your school district 1999-00 total current expense budget: \$_____.
7. Your school district 1999-00 school tax rate: \$_____.
8. What is the status of charter schools in your school district?
 Currently operating In planning stage No plans
9. How many students from your district were sent to charter school(s) during the 1999-00* school year?
Please indicate total number _____.
10. If applicable, please provide your school district's total current expense budget appropriation for charter school(s) for the 1999-00 school year.

School YearAmount Budgeted for Transfer to the Charter School

1999-00

\$ _____

PART II: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. How would you rate your knowledge of charter schools?
 Very Good Good Not Sure Poor Very Poor
2. How would you rate your knowledge of the New Jersey Charter School Program Act of 1995?
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3. Your school district operating type: K-6 K-8 K-12
4. Your school district enrollment range: Less than 400 400 -750
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5. What is your District Factor Group (DFG): _____.
6. Your school district 1999-00 total current expense budget: \$_____.
7. Your school district 1999-00 school tax rate: \$_____.
8. What is the status of charter schools in your school district?
 Currently operating In planning stage No plans
9. How many students from your district were sent to charter school(s) during the 1999-00 school year?
Please indicate total number _____.
10. If applicable, please provide your school district's total current expense budget appropriation for charter school(s) for the 1999-00 school year.

School YearAmount Budgeted for Transfer to the Charter School

1999-00

\$ _____

Appendix F
Respondents unedited Comments Regarding Charter Schools and
Their Effect on Public Education

RESPONDENTS UNEDITED COMMENTS REGARDING CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THEIR EFFECT ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

Charter schools offer another opportunity for parents and students. [021]

Charter schools take away resources from traditional public schools that are responsible for educating all children. [021]

Charter schools should not be funded with local district dollars. Cost should be from state revenue. [050]

Too many private school students not currently attending public schools elect to be a part of charter schools causing districts to lose funding. [050]

The state has the ability to implement charter schools in districts that were taken over by the Department of Education. [065]

Charter schools are a part of a movement that also includes vouchers for independent and religious schools as well as home schooling (with extensive soliciting from advanced Internet-based technologies). The goal of this movement is ultimately replace "a government controlled monopoly" with a "market-driven series of educational options." [066]

I believe that all efforts need to be focused on improving public education. Charter schools function under different rules than do public schools. They have fewer mandates and less accountability. They divert funds away from public schools. [066]

Charter schools present a significant fiscal problem for resident district. Most public schools work well. Additional funds should be spent on public schools. [080]

Charter schools should be held to all the same standards as public schools. This is not the case at the present time. [085]

I believe charter schools undermine the concept of public education. [086]

Generally, charter schools are a good idea. Unfortunately, New Jersey's way of implementing them is poor because of legislation and resulting [administrative] code. If you look to other states (Minn. or Ariz.) where they are very successful a lot can be learned. [096]

I strongly believe that charter schools do not create competition but rather we compete for funding. There is little data demonstrating that they are significantly better public schools and it is unfair to give greatly needed funding away to profit seeking private individuals calling themselves charter schools. [114]

Schools of choice and charter schools draw a select group and leave the masses in the public school. The state constitution says that all children must have a "T&E" education not only those attending schools of choice. Funds should not be taken from schools to provide a special opportunity to a select group of students. [143]

Charter schools are moneymaking propositions disguising themselves as educational alternatives to poor performing districts. They "feed" on good students in disadvantaged situations. The situation is exacerbated in urban districts. The remedy is to provide the funding to public schools to fully meet the changes necessary to improve. [147]

My primary concern is that current research indicates that special education classified children are under represented in charter schools. There should be more opportunities for special education students in charter schools. [154]

I believe students in "failing" districts should have an option like charter schools.*[163]

The charter school movement has not improved our district. Personally, I see some pro's and con's to the concept. Public schools are the great equalizer in our society. However, economics and demographics define the quality of our schools and communities. [165]

We should not legislate any program that we cannot adequately fund. Siphoning money from public schools to make the charter school program work is criminal! Public money should not be used to fund one dimensional programs that are popular. [177]

Charter schools in our area have had a "rocky" couple of years. One recently closed causing much havoc for students, parents and local schools. The idea may have some merit, I'm not sure. Based on implementation thus far, though, the concept has not been proven yet. We need to see results, both at those schools and in home schools. Frankly, I'm not impressed. [178]

We are a small K-8 district and send our grade 9 through 12 students to a facility that needs building renovations. The citizens of the receiving community will not address the facility needs nor pass bond referenda for our children. Hence I would like to propose a 9-12 charter high school to alleviate the problem. Those who want to continue the tradition can while those who desire to fulfill the research of small high schools can see it as a reality. [183]

Charter schools should have the same conditions and requirements as regular public schools including facilities. The two charter schools I visited were inadequate and in poor condition. [328]

There are several problems with the charter school program as it stands:

- ✓ Substandard buildings are allowed to be used
- ✓ Student population does not reflect the general district population
- ✓ The per pupil amount that is transferred to the charter school takes money away from the district because the actual costs do not decrease. For example, a class of twenty five students reduced by two students being transferred to the charter school does not cut costs - same teacher, bus, lights, etc. [337]

For districts that have not been impacted, charter schools are not high on the priority list. Good luck! [341]

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There is no accountability for charter schools. The DOE has very little involvement in determining the effectiveness of charter school performance. In my opinion, charter schools signal the death of public education. Public schools will be left to serve a stratified student population. Charter schools will not address the individual needs of all students, of all abilities, from all backgrounds. Concentrated effort to strengthen and improve public education is needed. [342]

As a receiving district, New Jersey regulations do not take into account the differentiated financial impact to a district which has its own resident students drawn away to a local charter school, while simultaneously losing incoming revenue of tuition from drawing away non-resident tuition students. [379]

The current system of funding charter schools puts a significant drain on public school financial resources. This system needs a serious overhaul and should be replaced by full state funding. The rules and regulations that govern charter schools should be the same as the ones for the regular public schools. [383]

I am a strong proponent of public education and feel that the charter school movement is the deathknell for public education. Why are we not putting funds into improving public schools for all children? We are quickly approaching an era when public schools will be for the "have-nots" of society. Supporting charter schools is a veiled attempt to support private schools and a voucher system. I strongly oppose the charter school movement. [392]

Our school district is currently in litigation with the local charter school because they refuse to racially balance their student enrollment to reflect the sending district. [395]

Charter schools are a fine option for parents and educators. [401]

Appendix G
Survey Letters

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Vincent J. Occhino
20 Maple Terrace
Verona, NJ 07044

June 28, 2000

Dear Superintendent:

I am a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University completing my dissertation. Currently, I am studying superintendents' perceptions of charter schools in New Jersey to determine their positions on the existence of the charter school movement in our state. As a superintendent you are an excellent resource to share information regarding the impact of charter schools in New Jersey. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study.

I am requesting that you complete the enclosed surveys, responding to the items from your unique perspective. The first document is entitled, Superintendent's Survey. The second is entitled, Part II: Demographic Survey. When I have tabulated the data, the results will be presented in summarized form. All responses, of course, will be confidential.

This project has been reviewed by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is 973-275-2975.

The completion and return of your survey will serve as notice of your willingness to participate. Your survey has been assigned a number for data collection purposes. Neither individuals nor school districts will be identified in the final research report. Once data has been collected, I will destroy the log sheet containing identifying numerical information.

A mailing envelope has been included for your response should you choose to participate. Please include a business card or your name and address if you wish to receive a copy of the study results. Your assistance in this study will be greatly appreciated. I am hopeful the findings will be helpful to educational leaders and policy makers in our state.

Sincerely,

Vincent J. Occhino

Vincent J. Occhino
20 Maple Terrace
Verona, NJ 07044

July 24, 2000

Dear Superintendent:

A few weeks ago, I mailed to you a survey about Charter Schools as part of a dissertation study I am completing. Your perception of charter schools in New Jersey is very important to my study. Furthermore, your responses and the return of the completed questionnaire will help me achieve a meaningful sample.

If you haven't had an opportunity to complete the questionnaire, or if you did not receive a survey packet, I have enclosed copies of the requested documents.

The entire task should not take longer than 10 minutes. Again, your assistance in this study is greatly appreciated. Finally, thank you for your kind attention to my request. Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Sincerely,

Vincent J. Occhino

Encl.